THE HUNTER'S MOON

ERNEST POOLE

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To Jo from
Aunt Margaret
1928

THE HUNTER'S MOON

BY

ERNEST POOLE

Beggars' Gold
Blind
Danger
The Harbor
His Family
His Second Wife
Millions
The Village
The Dark People
The Avalanche
The Little Dark Man

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ILLUSTRATED BY DECIE MERWIN

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TO

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CHAPTER ONE

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NEW YORK at dusk is a city of lights, but its roofs are a deserted land of shadows, dirty, vast and dim—for the millions of people down below are so busy, in their bright little rooms, that they have no time to be bothered with anything up in the skies. So it was on a soft October night, as the twilight piled the shadows high—till suddenly, on the grimy roof of an old apartment building in a cheap quarter of the town, a lid was raised, a head appeared in a glow of light from underneath—and behold, a miracle!—a New Yorker come up to look at the stars!

He was a very small one, a mere wisp of a boy, in fact, with sandy hair, thin, oval face, a sensitive little mouth and nose, and large grey eyes that twinkled and shone as he looked about. He drew a quiet breath of relief. It was so good to get away from those stuffy rooms below. There was some-

thing going on down there that made him uneasy and afraid, but here he very soon forgot. He turned and looked off toward the east, and with another sigh of content climbed out on the roof and dropped the lid—and became a shadow like the rest. He went to a big square chimney near by, sat down on the low coping beside it and grew very quiet there, with his hands in his lap and his head bent forward, listening. Soon the songs would come. He was waiting for his Grandfather Wade, who had just returned from a long, long journey and was in the flat below, talking to the family. In a few minutes more, he would leave them and come up here to this secret place, with his little old guitar—and then the stories and songs would begin. The color came into Amory's cheeks at the mere thought of that music now.

For Grandfather Wade was a wonder! He was not old or bent or grey, like the grandfathers in story books. He was very quiet and small, with sandy hair, like Amory's, and dark grey eyes. But no matter how small and quiet he was, the muscles of his arms were hard—Amory had felt them—and he was such a rogue inside! Although his face had wrinkly lines, and his eyes grew very sad at times, the very next minute they would change, and

flash and twinkle in such a way it made you jump! Oh, he was a rogue! Think of a grandfather who kept going all over the world! Quiet little Grandfather Wade had been doing it for years. And none of your Pullman cars for him. When he rode in a train, he walked into the smoker and lit his pipe; and before you knew it, he had made friends with the very roughest men who were there. On big ocean steamers it was the same. Right down among the sailors he went, with his old ukulele, and he would talk and sing, the rogue, until he got them singing, too. For he was a hunter, a hunter of songs. Out in the West, when he was young, he had ridden with cowboys over the plains, with thousands of cows that they called "little dogies" in the songs they sang to them. He had learned more songs from the Indians, too; he had gone right with them in canoes. He had ridden in gypsy wagons, the rascal, and had slept out on the ground at night. And in Europe he had ridden for days on great river scows or rafts, to learn the songs of the river men. Then back he would come, with his notebooks full; and out of those dirty pages, crowded with music and queer little words, came songs so strange and wonderful that they almost made you cry. But when he had finished singing

them, the old rascal would look up with a smile—and then with Amory he would enter into a world that was all their own, filled with songs as bright and gay as the chipmunks and the big white gulls on the secret island out on the Sound, where Amory went with his grandfather, to spend the day like regular scouts. Once they had taken a little tent and had stayed on the island all night long; and by the camp fire on the beach, looking out upon the Sound and the red lights of boats going by, and listening to the stories and songs, Amory's spirit had soared up to the seventh heaven of delight.

Yes, Grandfather Wade was a regular rogue. And waiting on the roof tonight, Amory chuckled as he thought of their adventures in the past and of others now so soon to come.

Then sharply he leaned forward and locked his hands together tight. For a wild, hoarse scream had come up from the street, a terrible, awful, haunting shriek that made your blood feel just like ice! . . . But only for a moment. It rose again, and again and again, but now it came from far away. And slowly Amory grew warm, his limbs relaxed and he said, "Pooh!" He knew just what that noise had been—nothing to be afraid of at all. Nor was there anything else up here that he need be

scared of in the least. As though to make doubly sure of this, he threw an anxious look around. Alone upon these shadowy roofs, so immense and vague and dim, it sometimes took a minute or two before you got the feeling of how perfectly safe you were. But he got it, all right, as he always did. And then, with a little glow of pride, "What a baby I used to be," he thought.

For the roofs had not always been so safe. Long, long ago—three years ago—when he discovered this secret place, at first it had been wonderful. But then one night that shriek had come, a shriek so big it filled the skies; and being only a baby then, only about six years old, he had sat huddled, icy cold. Though his eyes were shut as tightly as any boy could shut them, he had felt ghostly giants there swooping silently out of the dark. That hideous scream was heard again, and other awful voices came. At last, when he found that no huge hand came down from the night to grab him, Amory managed to rise and run, and scurry quickly down to his room; but the voices came right after him, down into his bed that night, and made a perfect bedlam there, of bellows, shrieks and haunting whispers. Oh, what awful dreams he had! Though he did not go to the roofs again, he had many more

of those terrible dreams; and keeping his fears all to himself, he grew jumpy, pale and thin. His mother grew anxious and cuddled him, and sang to him his favorite songs; and Grandmother Barnes, with a worried scowl, scolded, fed and dosed him. But none of that did any good. He would not tell them what he had heard, because they would probably laugh at him and call him "a little 'fraidy cat." And even when he was six years old, there was in small Amory Barnes a stout and stubborn something which made him grit his teeth and keep his trouble to himself.

But then Grandfather Wade came home from one of his long journeys; and in a quiet talk they had, he succeeded in finding out at last that it was the roofs which were to blame.

"Let's see what's the matter up there," he said. So up they came, and little by little Amory's terrors were cleared away. That awful scream? It was only the siren of a big hook-and-ladder truck, on its way to a fire, to save little boys. Those bellows? A ship going out to sea. Those ghostly giants? Only high buildings. Slowly, slowly the shadowy roofs grew all nice and safe and real. But when they had become like that, Grandfather Wade went quietly on to make them wonderful again. With

their mighty ups and downs, from buildings rearing to the clouds to small frame houses far below, the roofs turned into mountains, valleys, gorges, canyons, fairy castles, huge square forts and robbers' caves. At least they did to Amory Barnes, as he listened while his grandfather told of his journeys in foreign lands. He made them real, those journeys, no matter how wonderful they might be. As he talked or sang, the people or places grew just as real to Amory as the bricks in the chimney at his side. He could reach out and touch those bricks and always feel them, real and rough. And the songs and stories of Grandfather Wade were just like that. Even when they grew so wonderful that you had to hold your breath, still you knew they were all true—on sea or land, in war or peace, all just as true as true could be! Often, indeed, they were terrible—and yet you yourself felt always safe—which of course was very comforting.

Oh, he was a wonder! And now, the rogue, he was back from the grandest journey of all. Right around the world, by Golly, and through Russia, he had gone. Awful things had happened there, and a man as small as Grandfather Wade might easily have been killed in a jiffy. But had he been frightened? Pooh! Not at all! He had just gone

very quietly on about his business, trying to find what songs they had made. What songs and stories he must have brought home! Oh, Amory wished he would hurry up and leave those stuffy rooms below!

What was keeping him down there? Ever since he arrived an hour ago, he had sat talking, talking. He never had a chance to stop, for Amory's mother and father kept asking questions that hurried him on. But they did not ask the *right* questions at all, nor did they appear to listen to his stories of his trip. They both looked worried, and by their eyes you could tell they were thinking about themselves. How foolish and how tiresome! They were spoiling everything! And as for Amory's Grandmother Barnes, she sat there like a big woman of stone, with her eyes fixed on Grandfather Wade in such a way that Amory shivered every time he looked at her. There was something so queer about it all! Why could not she be nice to Grandfather Wade? Why in the world could not she see what a wonder of a trip it had been? In Russia he had been nearly killed! And he had been put in prison once! But he had got out and on he had gone; and in huts, in camps, on river boats, and sleeping with people right out on the ground—think of the songs he

must have found! Why couldn't she ask him to sing a few?

But no, she wouldn't—and what was more, she had always been like that. She just seemed to hate his songs, no matter whether he sang them himself or whether Amory's mother sang. His mother had a beautiful voice, sweet and rich and clear as a bell, and Amory loved to hear her sing. But when she sat down at the piano, if Grandmother Barnes were anywhere near, her look soon put a stop to it. For she hated songs, and journeys, too. Grandfather Wade, in his times at home, had taken Amory and his mother on some splendid little trips—once for two weeks to Canada, where they had slept in a tent in the woods; and again they had taken a driving trip in an old buggy, hunting for songs, 'way down through the mountains of Tennessee. But each time when they got back, how angry Grandmother Barnes had been! She did not shout or even scold—that was the awful part of her—when angry she didn't say a word. Her eyes just got that stony look. And Amory's fun all froze to death.

Why? Why? Why couldn't she see how fine it was? She was sensible enough, a mighty smart old woman. And she was kind to Amory, too. She cooked his favorite things to eat, and when he was

sick she nursed him; she mended his clothes when they were torn. Then why couldn't she see, he asked, what perfect wonders those trips were, and feel how exciting it was to get ready, to smile and dream about them for weeks? But she couldn't. Every time that he tried to make her see, in her big harsh face with its deep lines had come again that hard, queer look; and when she spoke, there was a quiver in that heavy voice of hers. For the truth of it was, she hated them! In her stony, silent way, she hated Amory's mother and his little grandfather, too—and she had always been like that—and he could not understand it! He did not like to think of it much. There are a good many frightening things that are mighty fine to think about, for they get you all excited, with the most delicious thrills, and you know that they will soon be over. But this was not that sort at all. It was frightening, dull and stupid, and it kept on every day. So Amory tried just to leave it alone.

And he succeeded most of the time; for, with all his love for stories and songs, Amory Barnes, when left to himself, was a perfectly natural little boy. He did not like soft stories, like the kind he heard at school; no, nor those sweety-sweety songs, like "Good Morning, Dear Teacher, Good Morning to

You." He would fairly glower at such stuff, or wink at the boy next to him, or shoot a good hard paper ball at some sweety-sweety girl who, with her fool head thrown back, sang as though she enjoyed herself. No, he liked things real and rough; and to see him on the playground, nobody would ever have guessed that he could sit alone on the roofs and wait for songs or the rising moon. And he took good care that nobody should learn. Once, it is true, he had brought his friend, fat Joe Winston, very mysteriously up to the roofs on an autumn night like this one, when the tiny lights from far and near were already twinkling out of the dusk. But Joe had just stared, in his dull way, and had said:

"This is a hell of a place. We can't play any ball up here."

Amory, when Joe said that, had felt a strange little ache inside. He had never brought boys up here since then, but still he had often come himself —to get away from the rooms below. For he got so tired of the way his mother and his Grandmother Barnes kept always hating each other down there. They bothered him—they made him feel as though, the minute he came in, they were fighting to get him, each for herself.

His mother did this by fits and starts. You could never be sure what she would do next. She would leave you alone for days, or be cross; then suddenly at you she would come, with her dark, laughing, tender eyes, and lips just twitching with gay smiles, and swoop you up and wash your face, and off to a concert you would go, with ice cream soda after that. She would talk to you then of Grandfather Wade, and tell stories of his wonderful life; or at the piano, when you came home, she would sing the very same songs you had heard at the concert sung by a chorus, sung with so many different parts, and with such grand big bursts of sound, that you did not know them—but here you knew. When she sang them, in a minute you knew that the songs you had heard in the great hall were just the songs of Grandfather Wade. And then you nearly burst with pride, and felt so warm and glad inside that, as your beautiful mother sang, you almost wanted to kiss her. Her voice brought a lump in your throat, and you knew you loved songs and stories and dreams, and that they were all wonderful!

But when Grandmother Barnes came in at such times, how she would look with her big cold eyes! And how Amory's mother would smile back—in a

teasing way that seemed to say, "Just you try to get him! Try!" And Grandmother Barnes would try her best. She would get him when his mother was out. She would help with his lessons and give him his bath; and when she had tucked him into bed, she would pop a good big piece of candy into his mouth and give him a joking little slap. And on rainy afternoons she would even let him ask in a boy to pull molasses candy. Just as nice and sensible! But the trouble was that all the time she kept sneaking in mean little remarks about his mother—for spending so much on pretty clothes, and for "running out" in the evenings to concerts with "that fellah of hers." Amory did not like such talk. Why shouldn't she get pretty clothes, when she was so darned pretty herself? As for "running out," she did not run, she walked quite sensibly down the stairs—he had gone out once on purpose to see, and had been rather disappointed. And as for a "fellah," why shouldn't she go with Mr. Lewis? Amory's father would not go, and Mr. Lewis knew more about music than anyone except Grandfather Wade. But Grandmother Barnes knew nothing of that—she could not even sing in tune. And yet she would make mean, sharp remarks about all songs as "so much trash"; she

called Grandfather Wade "a regular tramp," and all his trips a waste of time. Money! Money was the thing! She knew, for she had once been poor. They were pretty poor now, but nothing compared to how she had been as a little girl. When she spoke of that, her big hard voice grew so intense, and she described it all so vividly, that Amory got almost scared; and when she had him feeling like that, she would jump to talking of all the good things that you can get with money—a comfortable house outside of New York, in a "genteel place," with "respectable" boys.

"That's what money can get you," she said. "It will keep the wolf from the door and will give you everything you need. But to get it, my lad, you have to work, you have to fight!" said Grandmother Barnes. "And that's what your father is doing—every day and every night! And that's what you are going to do! We're going to make a man of you yet, in spite of them!"

And saying that, she looked as though she wanted to eat him!

All this was queer—and for months and months it had been getting queerer still. Early one morning, when he woke up in his narrow little room, he had found his mother in bed with him. And a few

weeks later there had been a perfectly awful time one night, of such loud and angry voices that he had run up here to the roof. When he came down, they were quiet again, and they had been quiet ever since; but he could feel the queerness still, in their voices and their eyes. And his mother still slept in his bed; and this was hard, because the bed was not very large, and every morning till seven o'clock he had to lie there very still until his mother wakened.

It was tiresome—yes, that was it—not only queer but tiresome! And most of all right now tonight! Here was Grandfather Wade come home at last, just full of stories and of songs; and instead of letting them come out, Grandmother Barnes with her silent stare had kept them all inside of him. It was as though she were trying to crowd him out of the room with her eyes. They just seemed to *push* him out! They seemed to say, "Get out of here, you singer and tramp!"

And Amory couldn't stand it! So he had softly left the room and had come up to the roof, because he knew that Grandfather Wade would soon steal up here after him. For the roof had long been their secret place of refuge from that face below.

Up here it was quiet, big and cool. You could

hear the winds fly over your head; and, as Grandfather Wade had said, you could almost hear the stars singing grand big marching songs, as they moved slowly over the sky. And the songs came from inside of you.

All at once a gay, excited look crept into Amory's large grey eyes, and he forgot everything below. He could feel a song just coming now. It started low, and a picture came of a camp fire out on the prairie at night, with the sleeping cattle, the "little dogies," in a great circle all around, and a tall, thin cowboy there, who was singing softly to the chords that were struck on his ukulele by quiet little Grandfather Wade. Amory knew some of the verses, and he sang them to himself:

Whoopee ti yi yo, git along little dogies,
It's your misfortune, and none of my own.
Whoopee ti yi yo, git along little dogies,
For you know Wyoming will be your new home.

Early in the spring we round up the dogies,
Mark and brand and bob off their tails;
Round up our horses, load up the chuck-wagon,
Then throw the dogies upon the trail.

It's whooping and yelling and driving the dogies;
Oh, how I wish you would go on;
It's whooping and punching and go on little dogies,
For you know Wyoming will be your new home.

Amory thought this song was a wonder; and when he had sung all he knew, he kept smiling to himself. But then the nice rough little song went flying away again out of his head—for from the chimney by his side there came the odor of corned beef hash. Eagerly Amory breathed it in, and in less time than it takes to tell, his mouth was fairly watering! How hungry he was! He forgot all the trouble down below and all the music under the stars; and thinking of his supper now, in a jiffy he became the same natural little boy who fought and played ball in the playground at school. Grandmother Barnes was cooking that hash! How she liked to surprise him with his favorite things like this! While he sniffed and sniffed, as though evoked by the magic fragrancc of the hash, her face rose up before him now, no longer stony, but friendly and nice, smiling as she watched him eat. Yes, she was certainly good to him! A nice old woman—and funny, too! In his fancy, a vivid picture came of Grandmother Barnes in her big bony corsets, apron and square, creaking shoes. So heavy and sure, as she walked about, you felt nothing could stop her. But suppose—suppose just once she tripped and went right plump down on the floor? Amory chuckled aloud at the thought. Yes, even

though she was good to him, he would love to see her go down like that. It wouldn't hurt her—not a bit! Her big face, as solid as stone, would go right down into the floor, as though the boards were soft as clay! Right through it would go, so that her face would appear all at once in the ceiling of the apartment underneath; and as the people there looked up, her face would say to them, "How do you do?"

Amory kept chuckling still—chuckling and chuckling, so that he shook from head to foot. Partly from relief, perhaps—for Grandmother Barnes, a few minutes ago, down there in the room below, had looked to him almost like an ogress. So it was very good indeed to picture her as so funny and nice. And so he kept on chuckling, even after the joke was over. But then his thoughts came quickly back to the songs that he was waiting for.

Oh, when would Grandfather Wade come up? Why in the world did he stay down there? Again and again did Amory look impatiently toward the lid from below. Why didn't the head of his grandfather come popping up? He was bound to come —he was bound to! Amory was sure of this, because, to begin with, he had seen the old ukulele in the hall; and besides, upon arriving, his grand-

father had slipt into his hand a secret letter, which said this:

"Meet me in our secret place—at the rising of the Hunter's Moon!"

And that meant a world of things—for Grandfather Wade had often told him of the things that happen outdoors, and of the wonderful songs that are sung in almost every country, beneath the big round Hunter's Moon. So now as he waited, Amory's eyes were turned anxiously to the east. The moon would soon be rising. Would he, would he be in time? As the long minutes dragged away, Amory's impatience grew. Surely his little grandfather was not enjoying himself down there. Perhaps Grandmother Barnes was keeping him! She hated all these secret times! Perhaps she was spoiling this one now! Forgetting how nice she could be, Amory fairly boiled with rage. But presently his fury left him, and he grew quiet as before—a small, thin shadow, motionless, his head bent forward, watching, watching.

Suddenly he caught his breath. Over the dark rim of the building rose the great moon, round and golden, rich and warm, ready for all the songs and stories in the whole wide world tonight.

But Grandfather Wade had not come in time.

With a big lump rising in his throat, and his thin little face set hard, Amory sat there very still, and grew terribly, terribly lonely.

CHAPTER TWO

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A FEW minutes later the lid was raised, but so softly that at first Amory, absorbed in his woe, did not hear it, nor did he see the head and shoulders of his grandfather appear. Waiting there a moment, and looking about until his eyes fell upon the little boy, over the face of Grandfather Wade came a whimsical, poignant smile. Then his look went up to the moon.

He was a quiet little man, but the fifty-six years of his life had been a long string of adventurings. He had been born in California. A dreamer and frequent truant from school, a wanderer along the Coast, a lover of 'Frisco, a music critic on a small

newspaper there, and one of the leading spirits in the renowned Bohemian Club—this had been his early life. While still in his twenties, he had married a girl with a fine contralto voice, and had written many songs for her. Some had been published in the East, and there through a friend he had secured a position as music editor on a paper in New York. They had come East, and had led absorbingly happy lives until, when he was forty, his young wife had suddenly died. It was then that he had grown so quiet. Later, breaking down in health, he put his little daughter Ruth in a boarding school, and went out West, to a friend's big ranch in New Mexico. There the cowboy era was just coming to a close, but he was in time to hear their songs, and grew interested in gathering those relics of an age gone by. From old cowboys and ranchmen he heard the songs and wrote them down, arranged them and, when he came back East, published them in a small book. Its success encouraged him to go on; and in the years that followed, he collected other songs —of the Indians and the Forty-Niners, and later on, of the poor whites who lived in the mountains of Tennessee. He traced their songs across the sea to England, and in later years his searches led to Russia, to Poland, and Bohemia. Book after

book appeared in New York; and though the income they yielded was barely enough for himself and his daughter, his name was known in the folk-song world of almost every country.

But more and more, as time went on, he hunted for the songs of today. In this hard, crowded, modern age, were the peoples of the earth still making songs of their own, out of doors, or were they allowing the new song factories in the towns to make songs for them like their clothes? He shunned the great centres and spent his time with the people in the villages—peasants, herdsmen, fisher folk, bargemen, woodsmen, mountaineers. Year by year he moved farther east—to Persia and the Caucasus; and he had already made a long trip to India when the War began. After the first shock of it, John Wade went steadily on with his search. For surely if the peoples were ever going to make songs, they would do it now, he thought. He went to numberless villages in Europe, where he had friends from the past, but he discovered no new songs except those sent out from the cities, in order to keep up the "morale." But then, as he moved from front to front, at first in lonely bivouacs in dense Russian forests, and later in the Italian Alps, and again in the water and mud of France—out of

the din and stench of blood, the real songs came, too real for print. Ribald humor, comradeship, devotion, grim, enduring courage, bestial passions—all were there. As the weary years dragged on, a note of rebellion began to creep in; and as the War crashed to its close, he heard songs of wild, new dreams for a Better Day. So, in dirty notebooks filled and crammed with music and dizzy little foreign words, he gathered the voice of a vast, torn spirit, raging, dreaming, and despairing, the soul of this sombre, pregnant age.

So some fifteen years had passed, in the life of Grandfather Wade. Engrossed in his world-wide hunting, and in the grip of the *wanderlust,* he still grew blue and lonely at times, and more as he grew older. But his daughter was married now, and the cheap apartment where she lived was not a home that welcomed him. Her husband, who ran a small printing business, had a hard time to get along; she was extravagant, quarrels arose, and these were fostered by his mother, with whom they lived in a small flat. Ambitious to see her son get on, and jealous of his gay young wife, she had kept preaching, "Work and save. Stop this singing, laughing, loving." She had preached it, not in words, but silently with her big cold eyes. And year by year

she had worked her will—stopping first the singing and laughing, then the loving—while all the while her own love, massive, silent, hungry, for her son and grandson, grew, and with it her hard, deep jealousy. Together they made an appalling force which Grandfather Wade could feel tighten its hold. It troubled him, it haunted him, every time that he came home.

He had come back this time hoping that things would be better now, but in the anxious look Ruth gave him, and in the way she came into his arms, he felt some new and sharper strain. There had been no chance to talk with her yet; but as he answered her questions and those of Frank, her husband, as to his long journey through Russia and Siberia, very soon he grew aware that they were barely listening, that locked in some petty snarl of their own, their minds could not open; and glancing over at Grandmother Barnes, he thought he saw a gleam of triumph and expectancy in her eyes. What was the trouble now? he asked. Then came a sudden reaction against them all, his daughter, too. This whole domestic tangle seemed so small and petty and mean, compared to the vast confusion and the boundless, dark despair out of which he had just come. Why couldn't they settle their

wranglings? Why give him *this* for a welcome home?

So he had left them and come up to find his grandson and shake off his sharp disappointment, find rest and some fresh joy in life. And this hunger and disappointment and anxiety showed in his whimsical eyes, as he watched the small, motionless shadow here. Then he smiled and gave a long, low whistle, a trill like a bird, as fresh and gay as his face had been sad. At the sound of it, Amory turned with a start.

"Hello, there," said Grandfather Wade, in the cautious voice of one scout to another.

"Hello, there," Amory softly replied.

Then his grandfather left the small circle of light, and now there were two shadows in the dim silvery glow on the roofs. For a few moments nothing was said, as they sat looking up at the great round moon. But over Amory's thin little face spread a smile of satisfaction. For he saw the ukulele tucked in under his grandfather's arm, and he knew what was coming very well. No nonsense about Grandfather Wade. Knowing how little time they had before the call to supper, he wasn't the foolish sort of grown person to waste whole precious minutes by saying, "Well, little man, and how

have you been?"—and other tiresome things like that. No, sir, he would come right to the point, for he was a real one and stuck to real things. In just about a jiffy now, he would bring out his old ukulele! . . . And that was exactly what he did—except that first he squeezed Amory's arm, and said, in a low, quiet tone:

"It's a pretty good moon, isn't it?"

"You bet it is!" was the soft reply.

Then chords on the funny little guitar—and Amory tingled and grew warm from his face to his toes. Golly! But he kept very quiet still, for his grandfather wanted him like that. So, when he was asked what song it should be, he waited till he was quite sure that he could say it quietly; and his voice had a judicious tone:

"Well, what you got? Any good new ones?"

"Yes." More chords. "But I guess I don't want to sing 'em tonight. They're the kind that tear holes in you, you see."

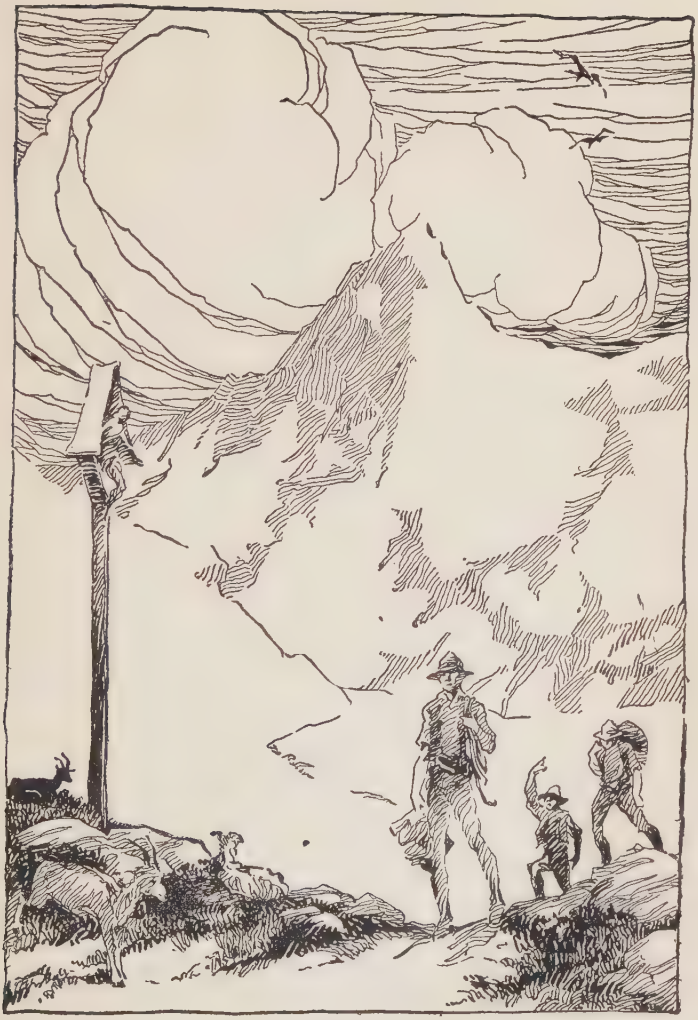
Amory knew that kind very well. None of that sort of stuff tonight! This was a night for being glad, and for making glad plans, too. He had one ready to pop out, as soon as the songs had prepared the way. So he said:

"Sure—I know what you mean." He drew a

deep breath, as he hunted about in his thoughts for the kind of song that would do. In a moment he had it. "That Swiss song is a thundering good one —the one you heard those three guides sing."

"All right." More chords. And with a warm, expectant glow, Amory closed his eyes and said, "Let's have the whole business." That, of course, meant story and all; so, as his little grandfather's hand kept sweeping slowly and very lightly over the strings of the small guitar, he began, in a low voice —which was all in time, like singing:

"Remember that house I told you about—away up in the mountains? The little house in the big, dark boulders—half way up the Saint Bernard. The place where you stop and telephone—up to the monks to send down the dogs—to meet you—if it's snowing. Well, it wasn't snowing that night—and so I didn't telephone. But it was cold—and getting dark—so I went into the little house to get a drink to warm me up. And as I sat there smoking my pipe—in came three young mountaineers. They were guides—who had just come down from a hard and dangerous week of climbing—up into the dizzy places—cliffs of dark and icy rocks—where you climb slowly up with ropes. And they had crossed the glaciers, too—great hilly fields of snow and ice —with big deep cracks to suck them down. They



had gone roped together there—so that if one slipped and fell—the others would still have a chance to hold him up—unless perhaps they slipped themselves—and all went falling down and down. There had been no falling this time, though—and they were safe and had drawn their pay. And so they laughed—and asked the girl to bring them drinks—and as they drank, they sang a song which laughed at the cold—and at being old—and at falling down and down. They laughed at the glacier and called her their bride. They told what games they had played with her. And at the end of each gay little verse they lifted their glasses and sang to their bride—'the lady with the icy kiss—and the everlasting arms.' They sang it laughing! And they were as young—and brave and gay, as the song itself! It went like this!"

And then he sang. All the time he was telling the story, you see, the guitar had been giving you, in chords, a kind of a feeling of the song. So now he slipped into it easily. And though the words were all in French, you knew just what it was about. And you felt so brave and gay yourself, so absolutely unafraid of anything, anything, anything—in those rooms below or here on the roofs or up in the misty, silent sky—that you just tingled!—and

felt so glad, that before you knew what you were doing, you had pressed up to your grandfather tight! . . . But as soon as he stopped, you drew away. You weren't going to act like a baby. And so you just sat and grew quiet again, and were glad your grandfather was home.

Amory said, in a grave little voice:

"That's a pretty good song, isn't it? Let's hear another."

Then Grandfather Wade told of a song that he had heard in Roumania, just after the War. It was at night, on the Danube River, on a barge loaded with food and clothes for people starving and in rags. And the people of the village near by were so happy, because they had clothes again, and all their boys and girls were warm, and had had a good hot supper—that they came down to the river at night and sang and danced. It was so dark that Grandfather Wade couldn't see them at all, but out of the night came bursts of music from queer twanging instruments, and bits of song and laughs and shouts. High up over it all, he said, rang the laugh of one glad little boy. And by a lantern on the barge, Grandfather Wade had written down all that music just as it came, and had mixed it together into a song which he had named, "Good-bye

to War!" As he sang it now, his voice was glad; and he struck his guitar in such a merry, dancing way, that you wanted to jump and dance yourself!

But Amory didn't. He sat very still, even after it was over. For the gay, delightful spell of all this, the fresh resistless magic of this voice from the World of Outdoors, was strong upon him. Into his head there suddenly popped again that plan he wished to propose—for a camping trip with Grandfather Wade. But it was not time to speak of it yet. So Amory said quietly:

"It's mighty nice up here tonight."

"Yes," said his companion. And then, with one hand still lightly brushing the strings of the ukulele, he asked: "What have you been doing up here, old scout?"

Amory began to tell. His clear, low voice was steady enough, but the games he described were pretty wild; for the queerness in the rooms below had got such a grip on him of late that, when he came up here by himself, he had needed pretty exciting games to make him forget. He did not know that was the reason, for he had never stopped to think it out; and so now he was rather surprised at himself, and a little proud, to find how wild the games had been. Cowboys had fought Redskins

here—they had gone creeping all over the roofs, in and out among the chimneys, shooting with guns and bows and arrows, scalping, whooping, groaning, dying! Amory on hands and knees had scouted through the bloody fight! And again, at dusk a flock of geese, flying high, high overhead, had become a fleet of aeroplanes; and down had come the fiery bombs; you could see them raining out of the sky. And flames had jetted from the roofs, till the whole city was ablaze—and then a tall, tall building had busted and come roaring down! . . . As he talked, he grew so proud of himself—without ever stopping to think he was proud—that Amory made all the games much wilder than they had really been. But as his voice grew breathless, he felt his grandfather's arm come around him, hold him steadily, quiet him down. And he stopped trembling pretty soon, and all the excitement died away. Then Grandfather Wade said, after a pause:

"I don't think much of those games, old scout—I wish you'd think up some quiet ones."

"I do think up some," Amory said. But he stole a look at his companion and thought, "It's all very well for you, you rogue—you can go 'way off wherever you please. I guess you'd want exciting games if you had to stay down there in our flat." Then suddenly he chuckled and thought of a fine, smart

thing to say: "I don't think *you* were very quiet—over there in Russia."

The arm of Grandfather Wade drew tighter.

"Oh, I wasn't very wild. But I guess I don't want to talk of it now."

Amory was disappointed.

"But couldn't you give us a song or two? Perhaps there was a quiet one."

In the silence that followed, he could feel his grandfather's mind go flying away around the world on that tremendous journey of his, over the seas and many lands, in mountains and great foresty places—always, always out of doors. What trips he had! All at once again did Amory's thoughts return to the wonderful camping trip which he wanted to propose. But just as he was mustering courage to speak of it, his companion said:

"Yes, there was a quiet one." And he took up his guitar. "One of the very quietest." And then, after a brief pause, "The Russians lately have been so wild, that people are likely to forget what hard times they used to have. It was enough to *make* men wild—but they bore it for hundreds and hundreds of years. And they bore it all so quietly. This song, which they liked best of all, is about the quietest song in the world. But you'll hear how beautiful it is."

Now his hand began striking rich, soft little chords.

"It's called, 'Down the Mother Volga.' The Volga is a great river, you know. And in the song —if you close your eyes—pretty soon you will see a long line of men—all pulling on a great big rope —pulling so hard they bend 'way forward as they trudge along the path. They are pulling a big boat upstream—and they have been pulling so long —and they are so very tired now—that it has begun to seem to them as though there was no rest ahead— and that all their lives they must pull and bend. . . . But all of a sudden one of them sees a white birch tree far ahead. And he says to the others, 'Oh, my brothers, there is a little tree I know. Let's watch it as we tug along, and it comes closer, closer —because, when we have passed it, we shall be closer to our rest.' So they all watch—and pretty soon they forget how hard they are tugging along. For the white birch tree—as they draw nearer— looks to them so fresh and young—it stands so straight and beautiful—that without their knowing why—all the things they have ever loved in their lives—come out of them—and make this song."

Then, just as the chords told Amory that the song was about to begin, Grandfather Wade asked quietly:

"Are your eyes closed?"

"Yes," he said.

"Then you are standing right by the tree—with the wide, shining river by your side making only such whispering little sounds—that you can easily hear the song coming—though it is still far away."

The song began, very soft and low. And holding his breath, with eyes tightly closed and a smile upon his face, Amory saw that long, dark line of bending forms come slowly along. In their song, he heard coming out of them all they had ever loved in their lives—and coming out so quietly that, though each verse grew louder, louder, there was nothing queer or wild; and instead of being sorry or feeling any lump in his throat, he felt glad and warm all through. It was as though a deep voice from the river were saying: "How very foolish it is, ever to get scared or cold. There is nothing in the whole world to be scared of. There is so much we love to do." Now they had come right past the tree, each with his hands on that big grey rope, every one of them bending low, but in their eyes was something shining! . . . Now they were going—on and on—and the song grew lower, softer, and even quieter than before, so that he barely knew when it stopped. He was smiling still, and his eyes were closed; so he did not see his grandfather's face, nor did he

have the faintest idea of how, in the silence which followed the song, Grandfather Wade heard Russian children all along that shining river, millions of them, wailing for bread. But when Amory opened his eyes at last, his companion seemed smaller than ever before, as though he had shrunk into himself —a motionless little shadow. And just for a minute Amory feared that their hour up here was to be spoiled, that his grandfather had gone flying away to a world where he could not follow at all. But in a few moments, Grandfather Wade turned back to him and asked with a smile:

"Have you made any songs while I was away?"

And Amory drew a quick breath of delight. There was a grandfather for you! He got you to thinking he'd gone away and left you and forgotten you; then suddenly right back he came—and always with some question that meant business! Had Amory made a song? He had! And all at once he was perfectly sure that his Grandfather Wade would like it, and that it would lead right up to the question, "Where shall we go camping this year?" For the song, you see, was about the woods!

"Yes, I've made one," Amory said. "Do you want to hear it?"

"Very much."

So he began. The song was about a chipmunk, whose mother said to him one day: "Don't you go up out of our hole, because there's a big fox hanging 'round." But the little chipmunk wanted some fun; and so, while his fat, sleepy mother was taking a nap that afternoon, up he popped out of the ground. (Grandfather Wade, the smart old rogue, had already caught the swing of the song, and was striking gay little chords as Amory sang quickly on.) And he looked around at the bushes and trees, and he said: "Oh, thunder—I'm all right. No old fox can bother me. I tell you, I'm not scared at all." And he saw a nut—and went for it. But it was pretty far away. And the fox came! (Crash on the guitar.) And the chipmunk scooted for his hole! And the big, long, willowy, bounding fox was right behind him! So he thought, "Golly! Can I make it?" . . . And he just scooted! . . . And he did!

Well, it ended finely. Amory's grandfather grabbed his arm and said: "Bully! That's a fine little song!" But after that the trouble began; for when asked how he happened to make it up, Amory answered:

"Well, you see, I was kind of lonely here. I wasn't having very much fun. So I got thinking of that trip—the camping trip we had last year."

Then he made a mistake. He should have gone

right on to tell what fun he had had on the trip last year, and so led up to, "Where'll we go now?" But darn it, he missed it! He made the mistake of talking first of how lonely he'd been, so as to make his Grandfather Wade sorry for him and ready to take him on a still longer trip this year. They might go off at Christmas up to the woods in Canada, to snowshoes, roaring fires at night. He was picturing all this as he talked, but his talk was still of his loneliness here; for he found to his annoyance that Grandfather Wade would not let him stop, but kept him here by questions that went right into those lonely times—when things had been so queer below, that he had sneaked up to the roofs to wait, till they stopped hating each other down there. And he didn't want to talk of that, but before he knew it he *was* talking, and he could not keep it back. For the old scared feeling had returned. There was something going on down there! Queer enough and strong enough to spoil all chance of camping trips! Even the voice of his Grandfather Wade had taken on an anxious sound.

"Why do you say that your Grandmother Barnes is queer to you?" he was asking now.

"Because she keeps saying I've got to make money! I've got to work and fight for it!"

"Well, she's mistaken. You'll never have to fight

for money. I'll see to that," said Grandfather Wade. "She's right when she says you will have to work—but the work you are going to do you will love. You're going to make some splendid songs."

"Oh, no; that's just the trouble!" said Amory, his voice quivering now. "She says I shan't make any songs at all! Or take any trips! She says she won't have you putting such things into my head! Just the other night, she said, 'I've got you now, and I mean to run things my own way!' "

He cuddled close to Grandfather Wade, who put an arm around him and said:

"But she hasn't got you. Your mother is there."

"Oh, she's queer, too!" said Amory. "She hardly sleeps at all any more—I can hear her, I tell you, awake in the bed!"

He felt a slight, sharp tightening of the hand upon his arm.

"Does your mother often sleep in your bed?"

"Yes—every night."

"Has she done it long?"

"Yes, she has—for months and months!"

There was silence.

"Well," said Grandfather Wade, "I'm sorry she's not sleeping well. She ought to go out more and get some fresh air."

"She doesn't, though," said Amory. "She used

to go out—most every night—with that Mr. Lewis, but now she has stopped it."

"With whom?"

"Mr. Lewis—you know who I mean." For Mr. Lewis was the one who published his grandfather's books of songs. "They went to concerts," Amory said. "But now she doesn't go any more."

"Your grandmother stopped that, I suppose."

"No, she didn't stop it at all. When he came, she was very nice to him. She asked him to come to supper even—evenings when Dad wasn't home."

"That's funny. She didn't used to like him."

"Of course it's funny! I tell you it's queer!"

Again Amory's voice was quivering, for into his mind flashed a memory of the very queerest night of all. Mr. Lewis had come to supper, and Grandmother Barnes had been so nice. But as she kept coming in from the kitchen, Amory had seen her watch his mother and her friend as a big cat will look at mice. She had told them Amory's father had telephoned he would not be home. Then she had taken Amory out to the movies. But outside, as they went downstairs, he had heard her chuckle to herself in a way that frightened him—and later, down at the movies, Grandmother Barnes could barely sit still. The show had been a wonder, of

course. Still, it had been funny to feel that strong old woman trembling so. As she sat pressed to his side, her big arm and her great big leg had trembled away like anything! Then all of a sudden she had got up and jerked on his coat and hurried him home. As they climbed the stairs to the flat, he had heard her breathing, hard and rough; and the minute they came to their door, he had heard loud, terrible talking inside. For Amory's father had come home and found Mr. Lewis there; and with his thin face all grey and tight, he had talked in a loud, shaking voice, which made Amory so frightened he could not even hear the words! But he had heard his grandmother say, "Well, if that's the kind she is, why don't you put her out of here, Frank?" And Amory's mother, who had been standing white and frightened, close to the wall, had said to her: "I'd *like* to go!" And the look in her face was so awful then that with a sob he had run for the roofs, and had run about in the dark up here, not knowing what in the world to do!

All this now flashed through Amory's mind, as he sat at his grandfather's side, shaking a little and growing cold. But he did not speak of it now. What he wanted to talk about was that camping

trip 'way up to the woods. He wanted it—he wanted it! He wanted to ask for it right away! But his grandfather kept on with his questions about this dull, frightening trouble at home.

"Then if Grandmother Barnes," he said, "was so nice to Mr. Lewis, I wonder why he has stopped coming?"

Amory knew, but he would not tell! He waited a moment and then just said:

"They had an awful time one night. They tried to make Mother go away and leave me here—and I don't want to stay! It's too darned queer, I tell you!" He waited again, and then he asked, in a clear, low voice: "How about a camping trip—like the one we had last year?"

There! At last he had popped it out! He almost laughed from sheer relief. And he felt all the happier when, with an arm around him, his Grandfather Wade said steadily:

"Yes, I guess it *has* been queer—and pretty hard on you, old scout. We'll talk no more about it now." But then, to Amory's sharp disappointment, his companion rose and added: "I'll go and talk to your mother instead."

That wouldn't do! The way to make sure of this camping trip was to fix it right away—before

Grandfather Wade had time to get mixed up in the trouble below! So Amory begged him:

"Yes, but wait! Before you go down, can't we talk a little—just for a minute—about what trip we'll take this year?"

The reply of Grandfather Wade to that was a perfectly tremendous surprise.

"Amory, old scout," he said, "I'd like to get you out of all this—just steal you—take you 'way, 'way off—for a good long time—for months and months!" His voice was so intense and low that something leaped in Amory's breast. Then softly and excitedly he answered:

"Well, all right—let's go!"

His grandfather asked:

"If I can fix it, will you come 'way off with me —to that fine big ranch in New Mexico—where that friend of mine has two boys, twins, just about as old as you?"

Amory jumped with the joy of it! He knew a good deal about those twins, for he had heard of them before! But then he stood there stiff and still, for in the voice of his Grandfather Wade was something that made him feel as though he were being asked to make a very tremendous promise indeed. But he did make it.

"Yes," he said breathlessly. "Yes—I will——"

"All right, that's fine," said Grandfather Wade. But he seemed to be thinking of something else, for he picked up his ukulele and said: "Now I guess we'd better go down."

The two small shadows moved over the roof to the opening. Just for a moment the glow of light which came from below revealed them—a mere slip of a boy with thin, oval face and shining eyes, and a whimsical, quiet little man, whose face looked very anxious now. Then they disappeared, and the lid was closed; and the roofs of the city, under the moon, were left empty and shadowy as before.

CHAPTER THREE

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In the meantime, in a room below that was garish in the hard, bright light, Amory's parents had been sitting; and though neither spoke a word, all the glare and jangle of the sparkling city of din seemed to have poured into their nerves. Frank Barnes was a thin, round-shouldered man in his early thirties. His florid, rather kindly face, with its narrow, tight-set jaw, looked gaunt and lean. As he sat in an old Morris chair by the lamp, with his frowning eyes on an evening paper, his nerves were plainly all on edge. From time to time, his long, tense hands made slight

restless movements. His wife was sitting perfectly still. She was a slender young brunette, with large, attractive features and big, beautiful black eyes. But her face held little beauty now; it had grown sallow and sharp and lined with the strain of unhappiness and suspense. With a bitter vigilance, she was listening through the open door to old Mrs. Barnes, who was moving about in the kitchen, getting supper. Now she came slowly into the room. Grandmother Barnes was sixty years old, but heavy and solid, strong for her age, in spite of the lines and wrinkles in her harsh, incisive face. For a moment she eyed with grim satisfaction her son and his wife; and then, in a low, heavy voice, vibrant, charged with a feeling suppressed, she said to her daughter-in-law:

"You're to talk to your father tonight. We've kept this waiting long enough."

"Yes," said Ruth, "I'll talk to him."

She looked Mrs. Barnes straight in the eyes; and the bitterness between them was so plainly to be felt, that her husband threw up at them both a quick, angry, tortured glance, and crumpled his paper impatiently.

Then Amory appeared at the door; and at sight of the expressions in the two women's faces, his

thin little mouth set sharply. In the hard, clear light of the room, his face and big, expressive grey eyes showed delicate and sensitive and fanciful, to a striking degree. His mother suddenly noticed him there.

"What is it, Amory?" she asked. "Where is your grandfather?"

"In my room," he answered. "He wants you to come and have a talk, before we have our supper."

His mother rose and came to him; and with a slight quiver in her voice, which had a sweet, rich quality now, she said:

"Very well, honey—come along——"

"No—he says I'd better stay here." The disappointment in his tone brought a burst of irritation from old Mrs. Barnes.

"Yes, you better had!" she exclaimed. "And from this night on——"

With a face distorted, Ruth broke in:

"Will you please stop talking in front of this child?"

But Mrs. Barnes answered, loud and clear:

"I'll take no orders, thank you! The boy is my business, after this, and I'll do the ordering here! You go to your father and give him the facts! And

don't you try to twist 'em about! Lies won't do you any good—because I mean to talk to him, too!"

Ruth drew a sharp breath and went out of the room, leaving Amory looking after her. He was trembling now, but he did not know it. He heard his grandmother say to him, in a voice which tried to be kind:

"Now I'll see to your supper, my boy."

He swung quickly about:

"Can't I wait and have supper with Grandfather Wade? Mother told me I could——"

From the harsh old woman came another burst of anger:

"Never you mind what she told you! From now on, you'll do as I say!"

When she saw that her words struck like a blow, her wide, heavy jaw set hard. Instantly her big, grim face grew kind again, and her voice had a pitying note, as she said:

"Poor little sonny—come along. Your granny knows what it is you need—a good hot supper and then to bed. You're tired to death. Come along now."

And he obeyed. He was frightened still, so he did not speak, but quickly went to his place at the table, and began mechanically to eat his favorite corned beef hash. Grandmother Barnes came and

sat down at the opposite side of the table; and glancing furtively up at her, he could see she was excited now, with a hungry and expectant expression in her big, hard eyes. She seemed to him to grow larger and larger—till he himself felt small as a mouse.

So he ate his supper without a word.

. . . . . .

His mother, in the meantime, had gone quickly into Amory's room, where Grandfather Wade was waiting.

"Oh, Dad," she said, "I'm so glad you're here!" She sat down at his side and took his hand. "But —oh, I'm sorry, sorry, dear—after that long trip of yours—to give you such an ugly time!"

He glanced at her intently, then looked down. The light was not garish in this room, but the face of the quiet little man showed gaunt with an anxiety which he did not care to hide.

"Has it been pretty bad while I was away?"

She pressed his hand. "Worse than you know! —Oh, Dad, I've tried and tried and tried! You know how it has been with Frank and me—a pretty dismal failure. But I tried to go on, for Amory's sake—and I could have done it, too, if only Frank's

mother hadn't been here! But she—oh, Dad, you'll never know! I tell you she set out from the start to make this happen!"

His hand tightened slightly.

"What?"

"Wait. You must be patient, Dad—I want you to know what led up to it, first. You remember, when you were here last, I told you I meant to find some work. Cooped up in here as we had been, it was getting simply unbearable. Frank's business was bad and we were in debt. His mother let the servant go. She wouldn't let me help her—and yet when I stopped trying, she made mean, stinging little remarks!"

"Yes, I know," her father said. "You tried Hal Lewis, didn't you?"

"Yes, and he was very kind—on your account—and gave me a job. And the change it brought was such a relief, I began to think our troubles were over. He gave me interesting work, editing some new French songs, and the place was a perfect God-send. I didn't have time to spend any money, and I was earning a little instead—and that eased up the money strain, between Frank and me. He didn't like my working, but his mother seemed to approve. She was glad to have me out of the flat. It left

Amory to her, you see, and she was quick to use the chance to try to get him away from me. Still, on the whole, she was more friendly. I was tired, and went to bed early every evening. For some time it was like that. But it was pretty lonely going, Dad. No friends ever came here any more—and so, when the novelty of my job wore off, there was simply nothing here—nothing, nothing here at night —but Amory—and he was asleep. And I'm only twenty-nine, you know." As her father's hand closed tight again, she faced him, with a strained little laugh. "You needn't look at me like that, poor dear. I done nothing so very awful. It has been just"—she bit her lips—"so absurd—and oh, so horribly cheap! . . . But that's only on the surface. The real trouble is deep—and it's ugly!"

"Go on."

"Well, I got very blue at times—right down in the dumps, for days on end. And once I got so desperate, I even flirted with my husband!" Ruth gave another cheerless laugh. "But that wasn't very successful. Poor Frank might have liked it, if I'd had a chance—but that terrible, grim old woman was watching; and though she didn't speak a word, she promptly made life so impossible here that I gave *that* up. And the life of our happy

home went on. Just money, money—every penny—scrimp and save and fight for more!"

"She was poor once," said Grandfather Wade.

"Yes," said Ruth, "I know all about that—and she's hipped on it, mad, with her wolf at the door! But does that give her any right to spoil my life with it—bringing it in like an ugly ghost—haunting poor little Amory—scaring him so?"

She felt her father's limbs contract.

"She can't help herself. Go on," he said. "And try not to excite yourself. Let's get to the facts—as soon as we can—and quietly."

"Yes, yes—I know." She paused a moment to steady her voice. "Then I turned back to my job again. For a while I thought it was all I had—so I tried to make it fill my life. And it did pretty well. You know how it is at Hal Lewis's office—everyone friendly, enjoying their work——"

"Yes—I know——"

"But then I found there was something else. Not at first. I didn't notice it. When Hal gave me tickets to concerts—so many are given him, you know—I was just glad to go alone. They helped a lot, those evenings—and, of course, I thanked him. Well, and we got talking then—and you know what sort of man he is. If only I hadn't married so young!

As it was, there was nothing at all that you could have found fault with, Dad. We were going to concerts together now, and to the opera once or twice —we went to 'Boris' and 'Coq d'Or.' But I didn't try to hide it from Frank. He didn't like it—I knew that; but he hadn't any love for me—his mother had spoiled that long ago—and for months and months I'd been sleeping in here with Amory. It was like that. So it wouldn't have worried Frank a bit to let me go. I began to think a little of that, and to feel that my seeing Hal, as I did, might just gradually bring it about.

"My precious mother-in-law made it seem more likely still. She couldn't have made it more plain if she'd tried. 'Here's the solution at last,' she said —not in so many words, of course, but by the way she acted, the satisfaction in her eyes. She grew almost human. 'That suit of yours,' she said one day, 'isn't fit to be seen in. Now that you're earning money, why don't you get a few decent clothes?' And she didn't stop at that. When Frank was away on business, she even asked me to bring Hal here to supper before a concert; and when he came, she took pains to have the supper nice, and kept out of the way as much as she could. She's smart, you know! She was watching close, and she knew that

what still held me back was the dread of losing Amory—of letting *her* get him—so she began to pretend she didn't want him now. All her hungry, jealous love for him seemed to be just melting away. She would just fairly yawn in his face, and often he seemed to get on her nerves. She would snap at him! And she told me once, 'That child of yours is a hopeless job. You and your precious father have put so much music into his head, that he'll be no use for the rest of his life. I declare, I sometimes wish his grandfather would take him away, and give me just a little peace. I'm getting old. I want to be quiet.' "

For a moment Ruth stopped speaking. Unconsciously her father's hand was gripping hers still tighter now. She went softly on:

"And all that time she was lying, of course—and the thing I'll never forgive myself for is that I didn't see it in time. I would have, if it hadn't been that I was beginning to care for Hal Lewis. I needn't stop to go into that now——"

"No—don't stop," her father said.

"Then summer came—and he went away—I wanted him to—to give us time to think it out. But in September he came back, and then he came to supper one night. When I got home from the

office that day, Frank wasn't here, and his mother said he had telephoned that he'd gone out of town, on business, and wouldn't be back till the next night. She was lying then, but I never guessed it. I called up Hal and asked him to come—and try over those new songs you'd sent—they had arrived the day before. So he came—and right after supper, Mrs. Barnes took Amory out to the movies—and left us alone."

Ruth was breathing quickly now. Her father looked up at her:

"And then?"

"Hal lost his head, and so did I. In your letter the day before, you had said you would soon be home; and when I told him, he made up his mind at once to try to get you to help us—set me free. And he spoke of that. He wanted to take Amory, too—and I thought that night it could be done. I've told you how *she'd* been acting—it looked as though the way were clear. We got talking about it so hard, we forget everything else but each other. And I did care for him then, you see, and before I knew it I was in his arms. So when Frank came in, we didn't hear him—and what happened after that was just as cheap as cheap could be!" Her tone was sharp and quivering. "I laughed, at first. It struck

me as comic—the look on both men's faces! Neither one knew what to do! But my laugh started Frank right in! And when he'd got going good and loud, in came his mother and Amory!"

In a low, tense voice, her father asked:

"And did Amory hear all that?"

"He heard a good part of it!"

"What did he do?"

"He ran up to the roof—poor little tike. I was pretty badly scared by then. Frank's mother was going it hot and strong—and it came over me, in a flash, how she had been planning for this, and what a blind young fool I'd been! She wanted Frank to put me out! I wasn't fit to be his wife, or Amory's mother! But I got pretty wild, I guess, at the thought of leaving Amory here—and Frank, who had come to his senses now, by degrees began to quiet down. The end of it was that on your account —because you were coming home so soon—he agreed to wait and settle things when you arrived. They've been waiting for you." She squeezed his hand and added, "Oh, Dad, I'm so sorry on *your* account!"

"You mustn't be," he answered, after just a little pause, "I'm quite as much to blame as you. I was wrong to be away so much—I shouldn't have left

you and Amory here—I ought to have stuck by you. But there's no use talking of that now. We must hunt for some way out of this—and you haven't yet given me all the facts. . . . Frank's mother wants Amory, of course——"

"Yes."

"Does Frank want him?"

"I don't think he cares. When I offered that night to go at once, if he would let me take Amory, too, he was just about to agree, when his mother broke in. 'No,' she said, 'the boy stays here!' "

Her father's face went rather white.

"You've given Frank no real grounds for divorce?"

"No."

"Does he believe you there?"

"I think he might, if it weren't for her—but her grim old mind is perfectly clear! She has seen a lawyer—and she claims they have enough!"

"They haven't, though—not if you've given me *all* the facts. You mus'n't keep anything back, you know—I've got to see just where we stand. Are you positive there was nothing else—nothing they could use in court?"

After a brief silence, she said:

"Yes—one night the end of June we went out

to Rockaway, Hal and I. It was fearfully hot in the city that night—and so, when the crowds on the beach thinned out, we stayed there until very late—and the nights in June are so awfully short that it was dawn when I got home."

"She saw you."

"Probably—I don't know."

"She probably did. That makes it bad. . . . Have you seen Hal Lewis?"

"No. He has kept writing and calling me up—but I was afraid it would make things worse. I've given up my job, of course—so I've been right here, all the time—but old Mrs. Barnes has left nothing undone to make me feel how utterly impossible it will be to stay—no matter which way the court decides! She hardly ever speaks a word—but her eyes are on me, and they say, 'I've got you where I want you now!' And she has! I can't stand it much longer, Dad—I hate her so and she hates me! And this puts me right down under her feet! Sometimes there's murder in both of us! I've—I've got to get away!"

"And Amory?"

"We must take him, too!"

"She keeps close watch on him, no doubt——"

"Yes—she barely lets him out of her sight. She

takes him to school—and while he's there, she watches to see that I stay here. I went out once. She followed me. And when I saw her, she said to me, 'While he's out, you stay at home!' . . . It has been like that. I've been afraid to go against her—or to try a single move—till I know where I stand."

"Do you want Hal Lewis, after this?"

"No, that's over and done with—I mean, on Amory's account. I feel so thoroughly ashamed—for having been so stupid, I mean! Not to have seen what she was doing—not to have kept better watch for him! If she gets him now, I don't know what I'll do! It would nearly kill him to have to stay here——"

"Yes," said her father, in a low voice. For a moment he was silent then. "Oh, Ruth, I'd like to find a place where people are happy and at peace. . . . There's that ranch down in New Mexico. I had a letter from Bill Stevens, only about two months ago, asking me to bring you down with Amory, when I came home."

"Oh, Dad, I'd love to go there again!"

"So would I—and settle down—see Amory grow quiet and strong, on the out-of-door life he needs so much—and give you a chance to find yourself."

"Never mind me! It's Amory! How are we going to get him away?"

"I don't know," her father said.

"We mus'n't leave him! I won't do that!"

"We may have to—for a while——"

"I won't—I won't!"

"Be quiet," he said. "Go back to him now—and bring him in here and put him to bed—and stay here—so as to give me a chance. I want to talk to Frank alone."

CHAPTER FOUR

CHAPTER FOUR

MEANWHILE, in the other room, as he ate his supper, Amory had stolen a glance from time to time at his Grandmother Barnes. She had stopped talking to him now, and was deep in thoughts of her own.

She had looked forward to this night as a time when all her planning would bring her the solid satisfaction which comes only with success. Instead of that, she found herself uneasy and uncertain still. Not of the struggle just ahead, for she felt perfectly sure about that. What brought a little uneasy qualm was the sight of Amory and his father —one eating his supper, the other reading—both

of them silent, far from happy. The question stole into her mind, "Now that I have them, what shall I do?" Would they be like this when Ruth was gone? How was she to handle them?

But she did not admit her uneasiness, nor did she stop to realize how often in the years gone by she had had this same experience. Again and again she had worked and schemed to get a thing, expecting when she got it to be happy and content. Instead had come to her each time a kind of feeling of emptiness and of disillusion. The fist that had closed with such eagerness had disappointedly relaxed, and had groped about as though in the dark—till she found something else to grab for. What was the matter with Martha Barnes? Everything she tried to get was a good thing, it seemed to her. She had honestly worked and scrimped and saved to get a clean and decent life, for herself and those she loved. Step by step she had fought her way; and when at each step there had come to her this disappointed feeling, she had grown used to it, fitting it in as an essential part of existence. For if she was a woman baffled by this city of din, she never admitted it. Most of the time she was sustained by the certainty that she was getting on.

Born in a wretched tenement home, its drunk-

enness and poverty had haunted her entire life, as a dark spectre thrust behind but always, always lurking there. The one clean, vigorous spirit in a family of ne'er-do-wells, from the time when she was a little girl, Martha Barnes had fought her way, up through public school and high school, here in the city of New York, to the deadening, relentless tune of troubles at home that never ceased. When at last her drunken father died, she had paid for a mass for his soul; and deep down in her heart she had known it was a gift of thanksgiving. By that time she had a job in a printer's shop; and working there for several years, forcing up her wages and grudging every nickel she spent, she had married at last the middle-aged foreman in her shop, and had gone to live in a home of her own. Now to get clear of poverty!

But as the months passed, in the little flat which she kept so clean and orderly, rather to her own surprise she discovered in herself a deepening passion for children. So she had a child; and when it died, she gave birth to another, and then another. Easy? Far from it! For even in those early years she kept pushing her husband on. Right here with her babies summer and winter, through heat and cold, scrimping, saving, managing, she drove and

bullied her cautious husband finally into taking a chance; and when he set up a small printing business, she courageously helped him nurse it through the critical years. There were labor troubles, strikes to be fought, and there were ruthless rivals, too, and firms who would not pay their debts. There were law suits, in which Martha Barnes more than once appeared in court; in the witness chair she enjoyed herself. Meanwhile, in the tenement flat, another baby had been born; and later, two more of her children died. She took the small coffins to Mother Church and watched them there, while a mass was said for their souls; and then she saw them go into the ground, with a silent agony in her eyes, as at some life torn out of her.

But back she came to her small flat and to the one child that was left. And the years passed, and the fight went on. What was wrong? She had climbed above the poverty line, but found herself dissatisfied still. She felt that what she wanted was higher, higher, higher up! And her husband was too old to climb; under the strain of business worries, already he was ageing fast. So more and more, as time went on, she put her hopes in Frank, their son, who had finished high school now and was in the City College. Against her wishes, at nineteen

he took a job on a newspaper, and got in with a wild lot of friends, who smoked and drank more than was good for them, and put ideas into his head. He began to go to theatres, and even wasted his spare time for months in trying to write a play. Still, he was young—let him have his fling. She found it hard to scold her son. His father would soon be stepping out and Frank would have to take the business. That would settle him soon enough.

But one night he came home and told her that he was going to marry Ruth Wade, whose father had been music editor on the same newspaper with Frank. The news was like a knife in her breast. She burst out at her son in a tirade then, but soon discovered her mistake. She saw she must bear it, wait again. In the weeks and months that followed, Frank's evident happiness made it worse; and the girl—young and pretty, plainly a spender, just the kind to drain a man of his strength and of his money—roused at times in Martha Barnes a fury of rage and jealousy. But having failed to break the match, she knew enough to keep silent now, while behind her big cold eyes she forced her feelings under control and resolved to bide her time. And when later her husband died, in a long, determined talk with Frank she prevailed on him to give up his job and take his

father's place in the business. During his father's illness, the business had been running down; and before many months he found himself in such urgent need of money, that his mother won her second fight, and induced him to bring his young wife here to live with her, to save expense.

Here she tried to bring back in Frank his lost idea of the value of money, and to drill it into the girl. But she found Ruth a hopeless case. Not only dresses and finery turned her fluffy, silly head—she was forever after Frank to go to concerts and even the opera. The girl was simply music mad! She took him out to parties, too; and at home she must even have a piano, so that she could sing to him. How Frank's mother hated those songs! Then a baby came, and expenses increased—till Frank looked worried, day and night. But Martha Barnes was not beaten yet. Now she clearly saw her course. She said little, but contrived that every bill and needless waste should come to his attention, and with grim satisfaction she saw the effect upon her son, as Ruth came on him for money still. At times indeed it was hard for his mother to see the business she had loved come so dangerously close to a crash, and to see her son so gaunt and thin. But it was teaching him—that was the point—teaching him that his wife was a fool, and that his mother

was his friend. While Ruth spent his money, Martha helped him make it—listening to his troubles and giving him shrewd, sound advice. Year by year the effect grew plainer. Slowly Frank drew away from his wife—worked harder, came home later, refused to go to parties and concerts, discouraged Ruth from asking friends here—just ate his supper, and then like a man lit his pipe and picked up his work for the evening. In five years from the time of his marriage, Ruth's hold on him was nearly gone.

And the fact that Ruth rebelled, as she was crowded slowly out, only deepened Martha's satisfaction. For she knew that she was the stronger now, and she took keen relish in the fight. Time and time and time again did Ruth nearly win him away. As his business worries abated, he was caught again by her pretty face, her big black eyes and that sweet, rich voice of hers. Her father, too, the singer and tramp, that half crazy little man, came back from his journeys and often got Frank to talking of old days when they had been on the paper together. And to hear the three of them, you might have thought there was something dull and mean about earning money—that newspapers, books and songs and trips were all that was worth while in life! But they did not hold him long. For grimly Martha

won him back, with that one idea which she knew to be the deepest and strongest in the world, and which she had planted in him as a boy—of the value of money. Again he brought work home at night; once more he was a business man, talking to his mother in good, clear terms of dollars and cents. She knew now that he was safe.

But then that precious pair of songsters, having failed to ruin Frank, began trying the same old game with his son. And so the conflict was renewed. For as Amory grew from a baby into a fanciful little boy, his grandmother had come to love him. The hunger for children was in her still, and for this one grandchild she began to plan ahead. She wanted a good, substantial home in some respectable suburb, where he could go to a good school; she knew what she could make of him, if she only had the chance. But Ruth and her father kept entering in, and the poor little kid had his head so filled with vagabond songs and stories that he was all but spoiled for life. Martha had steadily fought them there, and in the struggle her hatred had returned with a force tenfold. It was about time to end this! Business troubles had come again, and she lost all patience when she saw Ruth adding to the trouble load. What a home for Frank to come to at night! Peevish and discontented here, Ruth made the place

unbearable! She was no longer a wife to Frank, and it was high time that she cleared out. But how to make her give up the boy? As Martha was casting about in her mind for some new pressure she could bring, suddenly with a warm, sharp thrill she saw the chance—another man! And she set to work very carefully then, with the results already told.

She had done it thoroughly this time. Ruth was finished. Out she would go! And after ten years of constant friction, Martha's home would be left in peace. She would help Frank force the business up, as she had often done before; she would take Amory in hand, root the nonsense out of his head and make a little man of him. But it was exasperating to know that while she planned for his safety in life, this small boy was afraid of her. Why was he so scared tonight? There he sat, like a little mouse, as though she were some enormous cat about to pounce upon him. Why? Because his mother had made him so—with her talk and all the scenes she had made, right before the child's very eyes! As she thought of all the harm Ruth had done, a little gust of anger came. What lies was Ruth telling her father now, in there in Amory's little room? Well, it would do her no good to lie; her father would soon be plainly told to take his daughter and get out!

The next moment, once again came that slight twinge of uneasiness; and glancing at Frank and Amory, she asked how she was going to handle them, in the many nights ahead. But she smiled grimly at her qualms. Handle them? How could she fail? Had she not always succeeded, so far?

And this confidence, this uneasiness, this bitterness, this hungry love—were all mingled in the expression that came on her harsh, heavy face, as she sat plunged in these thoughts of her own.

. . . . . .

She roused herself and asked the small boy:

"Want any more of that rice pudding, sonny?"

"No, thanks," was the soft reply.

She frowned. It was one of his favorite dishes, and she could not remember a time when he had ever refused it before.

"Got your lessons done for tomorrow?" she asked.

"Oh, yes'm! Every one of 'em!"

The alacrity of his answer brought just the sign of a twinkle into her big, heavy eyes. But then they darkened, as she guessed that his fib was on his grandfather's account. He was hoping for some songs tonight. But she let the matter of les-

sons drop. No discipline this evening—she had too much else on her mind.

"How's your sore toe?" she inquired. She had bandaged a bruise the night before.

"Oh, it feels fine," he answered quickly. He could not have made it more plain, if he tried, that he wanted her to leave him alone. And his Grandmother Barnes frowned again. This was what his mother and grandfather had done to him! What a hold they had on the boy! Grimly she began to rehearse the things she would say to that precious pair! And this showed in her gleaming eyes—and, glancing up, Amory saw it there. A cold little shiver went down his spine. His grandmother was queer again! Suddenly he remembered what she had said a half hour before—"The boy is my business, after this!" What had she meant? At first it had scared him, but sitting here his fright had gone, and instead had come a dull sensation of being hopelessly bound close to something huge and tiresome, looming over his whole life. How she had bossed him lately—hardly letting him out of her sight! Was she going to boss him always like this? How about that trip with Grandfather Wade? If Grandmother Barnes were the boss, as she said, she would certainly put a stop to that! Amory clinched his small, tough hands tight together in his lap—but

then came back the memory of that talk upon the roof. Yes, Grandfather Wade would fix it, he thought. "Steal you away!" That was what he had said—and that was exactly what he would do! He would come probably in the night, with a low, secret whistle, and together they would steal away. Oh, Grandfather Wade was a wonder! He glanced again at Grandmother Barnes; and though the idea of running away brought a little rush of fear, it was drowned by an exultant, tingling feeling deep inside—until suddenly he remembered a time when Grandfather Wade had promised a trip, and then at the last moment he had failed to bring it about. Suppose that he should fail this time?

Amory sat perfectly still, forgetting that his supper was over, or that his hands were cold as ice. He must get a-hold of his grandfather just as soon as he possibly could, and have another talk with him. Would his mother never be through?

. . . . . .

At last she came into the room.

"Have you had your supper, honey?" she asked.

"Yes'm."

"That's a good boy. Now come along and get ready for bed. You have a bath tonight, you know."

He threw a look of indignant reproach and ap-

peal at her—for forgetting that he never took a bath the night his grandfather came home. By instinct he turned to Grandmother Barnes, for he knew that she was always against anything his mother said.

"Can't I stay up a little tonight?"

But it was his mother who replied.

"No, you can't!" she said sharply. And his grandmother said nothing at all. Why didn't she? The next moment he knew. For Grandfather Wade came in from the hall, and Amory remembered at once that his Grandmother Barnes had said she wanted to talk to him tonight. Well, what was she going to talk about? How long would it take? And when at last she was through with him, what other grown person would get him next, and keep him from coming to Amory's bed? The tears rose hotly to his eyes. If anyone had told him then, "Your grandfather isn't your whole life. A week ago you thought of him only once or twice a day"—he would have thought that person crazy! For it seemed to him tonight that his Grandfather Wade and that long trip were absolutely everything that he had ever wanted in life! . . . So when, in the hall, his little grandfather gripped his hand as he came by and whispered, "I'll see you in bed, old scout"—he choked and ran blindly to his room.

"If only we can make our sneak, and get away in time!" he thought. He could not have told what he meant by that, or just what it was he dreaded here. But the fear, though vague, was close and real—part of this awful queerness!

He no longer balked at going to bed. The sooner he got through with that bath, the better the chance for a good long talk when his grandfather came. So he tried to be quick. But to his surprise and growing impatience, he soon found that for once in her life his mother wanted to be slow! How thundering queer these grown-ups were! His mother had always hustled him so, when he wished to take it easy, and joke and talk or be lazy and dream; but now, when for once he wished to hurry, she wouldn't! In his undressing, and then in his bath, she was so slow you might have thought that she felt she would never have a chance in her whole life to do it again. She washed his head and rubbed it dry, and looked at his scalp and into his ears—and then cut his finger nails! And all this time she talked and laughed, and even kissed him once or twice, and sang one of his favorite songs.

Amory barely listened. He was in bed now, sitting up in his little red and brown wrapper. He asked her to go and tell Grandfather Wade—but she wouldn't go; nor would she even wash herself

and get ready for her supper. No, sir, she stayed right here by the bed, as though she couldn't bear to go! Why couldn't she? Why not leave him alone? You couldn't plan such a whale of a trip without a lot of secret talks! But his mother was singing another song—and suddenly, in her rich, low voice, his sensitive ear caught a tremor there which made him turn his head with a jerk and look at her closely. Then he remembered all at once that, when he ran off with his grandfather, she would be left here all alone. It would be pretty tough on her—left alone with Grandmother Barnes. As he saw the look in her face, a lump rose in Amory's throat, and he was almost ready to kiss her. But then he thought, "Why can't we take her along?" Here was still another thing to be talked over with Grandfather Wade. Oh, why in the world didn't he come?

When he heard a step come down the hall, he grew stiff for a moment, listening—then disappointedly relaxed. For he knew that heavy, creaking tread. It was Grandmother Barnes. She came to the door, and without knocking she announced to Amory's mother:

"Your supper is ready."

"I don't want any, thanks," was the reply. There was silence. Then old Mrs. Barnes went creaking

away, but Amory had no ears for her now. He looked at his mother, annoyed and surprised. She didn't want any supper; she was going to stay right here! Then when, if you please, would there be any chance for any secret talk at all? They couldn't have *her* hanging around! And he almost scowled at her now. Why couldn't she go and *eat* her supper? Why couldn't she sleep in her own room? This room was *his,* and in the past it had always been a secret place for Grandfather Wade and himself at night, for long, delicious talks in the dark. There had been such talks with his mother, too, but he had forgotten them tonight as completely as though they had never occurred. His whole mind was on the chance which he felt rapidly slipping away. All at once, in a hard little voice, he asked:

"Why *don't* you go to supper?"

Now came the queerest thing of all. His mother looked as though he had hit her right in the face. In a quick, sharp way, she drew in her breath and said, "Oh, honey!" All at once she grabbed for him and drew him into her arms so tight, he could feel her shake like everything!

"Don't you want me here?" she whispered. "Don't you want me, Amory, dear?"

He shot one startled look up into her wonderful black eyes, and saw them shining now with tears.

Then suddenly his throat grew tight, and the next moment, in spite of himself, Amory was crying, too —though what in the world it was all about he couldn't for the life of him say. Nor did he try. They just grabbed one another and cried and cried. . . . But later, when she wiped her eyes and smiled and said, "How silly we are. We'll all stick together, dear, you and grandfather and I——" then he did some thinking, and mighty quick, hard thinking, too! What did she mean? Had she heard of the big runaway plan? Could he talk of it with her? He wanted to! But no, he couldn't, for this was a secret between his grandfather and himself; and he wasn't going to risk letting any woman into this. She might just ball the whole thing up, get it all mixed in with that queerness which Amory was afraid of here. No, he must keep this to himself. He remembered a phrase from a sailor song of his Grandfather Wade's—"Mum's the word, my hearty"—and said it softly to himself, even while she held his hand.

She was singing again, very softly, as though she were trying to put him asleep. And he let her sing, but he strained his ears for his little grandfather's step in the hall. It was getting mighty late, you know! Grandfather Wade might have had more sense than to get stuck so long as this! The

tears again started in Amory's eyes, and had to be gulped savagely down. He racked his brains for some way out. He thought of asking his mother if she didn't want to go and read. But no, that might start her to crying again and making babies of them both. It would be better just to lie still. When his grandfather came, he might still think of some good way to get rid of her. A bath—that was it. He might say to her, kindly and very politely, "Why don't you go and take a good bath?" If she did, the moment she was gone, Amory would start right in—for there would be no time to lose! "Now how about that trip of ours?" And they would jump right into it.

As he went over it now in his mind—the whole delicious business, the sneaking out of here at night, the rush downstairs, with Grandmother Barnes behind him shouting, "You come right back!"—the race with Grandfather Wade up the street, the train, the long, long journey, the ranch far up on the mountain side, those two other boys and their ponies galloping over the plateau, the cowboys all around them, and about a million cows—Amory passed quickly from icy cold excitement to a warm, exultant glow. But now his mother lay down by his side; and as her soft hand closed on his, he felt terribly

sorry for her again. Suppose they *couldn't* take her along, and she had to stay here in these stuffy rooms? She had been pretty good to him, you know! Not always—for she often forgot. But at times she had taken him off on sprees—to *Pinafore* once, and again to the Zoo, and again 'way up the River with a picnic basket lunch; they had been gay as chipmunks there. And at night she had often sung to him, holding him close in her arms—when he was only a *little* boy. What would she do when they were gone? Grandmother Barnes wouldn't let her sing and would be mighty mean to her! As he thought of just how mean she would be, all that warm, exciting glow went out of him; and he felt so uncertain about the trip, and so lonely and so shivery and so guilty at leaving his mother like this, without even letting her know—that he nearly told her, then and there.

But he waited, and then in a minute or two he decided not to do it now. For he did not want to get her all excited, as before; he wanted her to go to sleep, so that when his grandfather came to the door and whispered, "Is the way clear?"—he could whisper back, "Yes! Come on in!" . . . Moreover, he had his practical side, and the bright idea occurred to him that since the big trip was still

uncertain, he'd better make sure of a small trip now. How about asking Grandfather Wade to take him out to their secret island on the Sound, tomorrow morning, to spend the day?

"Yes," he decided, "that's the thing—and I'd better 'tend to it tonight."

But, as he lay waiting, waiting, back went his thoughts to the greater adventure—the biggest one, it seemed to him now, that had ever been set out upon by any little boy in the world. With eyes tight shut, his fancy went flying away with Grandfather Wade to Cowboy Land, and clearly and distinctly Amory heard his grandfather's voice singing, in a croony way, one of those songs that the cowboys sang to their herds at night, to keep them quiet:

Last night as I lay on the prairie,
And looked at the stars in the sky,
I wondered if ever a cowboy
Would drift to that sweet by and by.

Roll on, roll on;
Roll on, little dogies, roll on, roll on,
Roll on, roll on;
Roll on, little dogies, roll on.

The song was so very croony and low that he began to get drowsy now. . . . For a moment,

he was sharply roused by a low, quivering breath at his side, which meant that his mother was still awake. He grew so sorry for her again, and just for a minute he loved her so, that once more he wanted to kiss her. . . . Then he thought she might think it—pretty funny—for him to be—doing that. . . . And while he hesitated—suddenly he fell asleep.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHAPTER FIVE

And all this time, in the other room, Amory's little Grandfather Wade had been waiting for a chance to speak with his son-in-law alone. But Grandmother Barnes kept coming in, putting dishes on the table; and though she never looked at him, he felt the vigilance in her eyes. He knew that the only hope lay in Frank; for in spite of his troubles with his wife, Frank had always been friendly enough to his little father-in-law. Tonight, as soon as Ruth left the room, he had looked up from his paper, and in his strained, troubled face was a look which said, "I'm sorry for this on your

account." With his mind locked up in business worries and this mean domestic snarl, he looked tortured, thin and old. What a change from the bright, lovable youngster, the newspaper cub of those early days, before his grim old mother had fastened her grip upon his life. And now she wanted Amory, too, and it looked as though she were going to get him. As John Wade racked his brains for some way out, he recalled the hour just spent on the roof; again he saw Amory's shining grey eyes picturing the three Swiss guides, and the broad, gleaming Russian river. Down, down the little boy must come, away from all such pictures, into the glare and grabbing of this hard and greedy life. Humanity vast, mysterious, with its tragic glory of hopes and dreams, impenetrable destinies? No, none of that! Wipe out such fancies—merest drivel! Down, down, and learn to grab—learn to claw for money—fight!

They were at the table now; and as Grandmother Barnes sat eating slowly and sipping her coffee, she loomed large, resistless; to the whimsical little man her face looked like a granite cliff. She seemed reluctant to leave them. Even when supper was over and she had taken the dishes away, she kept coming back on various errands. He caught a glance she gave to her son, as though she were warning

him not to soften; but in answer, in Frank's eyes, Wade saw an angry, tortured gleam—and he felt a slight glow of hope. Frank was no weakling, after all. For ten years he had fought his way and kept from going under. Strained and troubled, desperate now—he would do almost anything to get a little peace in his home. Did he really care for Amory? He might give him up to be rid of Ruth, even though to do it he had to go against his mother.

Finally John Wade began.

"Frank—tell me your side of all this," he said. Frank looked quickly up at him.

"I'm afraid it won't do us much good, old man—the time for talking has gone by."

"I'm sorry. Still—let's hear the facts. We've been pretty good friends, you and I; and I don't want to fight you here—I want to help. Don't think I'm trying to patch this up. I want to help make it easier—to end it right."

"It's *got* to end," was the reply. "I've stood it about as long as I can!" He stopped short, looking down at his long, lean hands. Then, in a low, sharp voice, he went on: "I want to be fair to her—God knows—and I don't say she was all to blame. We started wrong. In those first years I acted like a damned young fool. I didn't hold back as I should

have done—went out with her too much at night. Happy? Yes! But we couldn't afford it! Competition in this town is just another name for Hell—you've got to watch it all the time, and bring your troubles *home* at night! I didn't! I was in love with my wife! . . . Well, and so the trouble began—and in all these years it has never stopped! I look back on 'em now and see two women. Mother always saving money—helping me to meet Ruth's bills, and like a business partner always ready to listen and plan and give me her good, sound advice. Ruth exactly the opposite—glad when she could get me out to spend some more of our hard-earned cash—peeved when she couldn't. Taking no interest in my work—no interest in saving—no interest in getting a home! What does she care for the trouble I'm in? In this last year there's been hardly a month when I didn't get called down to my bank, to be put through the Third Degree. You know nothing of that, thank God—you don't know how it feels to come out of a bank wiping the cold sweat off your face! I do! And how has Ruth helped me there? Love? Sympathy? Yes—plenty! But not for me! For another man!"

As he paused for a moment, Ruth's father said:

"You're not fair to her, Frank—she took that job with Lewis to try to ease things up a bit."

"The little money that she earned wasn't enough to——"

"Never mind that. I say she tried. And as for that affair of hers, she didn't hide it, did she? You knew she was seeing him every day, and now and then in the evenings, too."

"Yes, and I didn't like it! I stood for it because I thought I could trust her! I didn't expect to come home at night and find her in another man's arms!"

"You're right, and Ruth was a young fool. But I don't believe you have grounds for divorce."

"I have for separation—and that's all I care about. God knows, I don't want to marry again. If she does, and she wants a divorce, she can have it. I want to be reasonable here. You know how I've always felt toward you. It's for your sake I've let her stay—till you got home. I knew that I could count on you to get her away without any fuss."

"You can, Frank—if you'll do your part."

His son-in-law looked quickly up.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked.

"Amory," said Grandfather Wade. "I don't want to leave him here. Now think a minute before you reply. Can you honestly say you want him, Frank?"

"Yes—I can." The lean face of Amory's father grew even more tortured than before. "I do care a lot for him still. He reminds me——"

"I know—of all you've lost—not only Ruth but those days on the paper—when you and I were such close friends. But you've lost it, Frank, it's all behind. And if you try to keep him here now, it will only make you both unhappy."

"No!" said Frank. "After all, he's my boy—and as soon as Ruth is out of the way, and we get a decent chance at him——"

"Your mother, you mean—she wants him here."

"She does—and I mean to give her a try. If she fails, it will be time enough for Ruth to——"

"Yes, but Ruth won't wait! From what she has told me, I don't believe she'll give him up!"

"She'll have to!"

"Not without a fight. And you don't want that and neither do I. You want some peace and quiet here. Frank, what I'm asking of you is that you let me take the boy and his mother away for a time—to give you a rest from this long strain, and give us all time to quiet down—so that we can settle this sensibly."

"I expected you'd try that," said a harsh voice from the doorway. "But it shan't be done!" As Grandmother Barnes came into the room, her heavy

face was quivering. "That daughter of yours has all but spoiled Frank's life as it is! She's not to spoil young Amory's, too!"

"She won't spoil his life——"

"No, she won't get a chance!"

"But she happens to be his mother, you know."

"A pity she didn't remember that, before she got herself into a fix where this whole matter is in our hands!"

"I don't believe that's settled yet."

"It isn't, eh? Then try it out!"

"That will take a little time. And we want to do this quietly."

"I'll bet you do!"

"And so does your son. And I don't see why it can't be done. We're all agreed on the main point here. Ruth must leave—and she will, at once—if you will let us take Amory."

"It shan't be done!"

But Grandfather Wade gave no sign of hearing her. He turned to her son and said:

"Suppose that we look at this for a minute from little Amory's point of view."

"All right," said Frank. His mother broke in:

"Do you mean to say I'm not thinking of that—the boy's own good?"

"Now, Mother," Frank said sharply, "let's listen

a minute! Give him a chance!" But the angry old woman would not be stopped.

"Who has a better right than I to speak for that child's good?" she cried. "Who has cooked for him, all these years? Who nursed the boy when he was sick, and mended his clothes when they were torn? I did! And I kept him in school and heard his lessons, night after night! There's nothing the matter with the boy. If it weren't for you and your daughter, and the stuff you've put in his head——"

"But we have, you see——"

"You won't any more! I propose to root it out —and make a little man of him! Make him like *other* kids his age!"

"But he isn't like other kids of his age. The songs are in him—part of him. And if you try to root them out, you'll only fail—you'll find yourself with a desperately unhappy little fellow on your hands!"

"I'll take a chance on that!" she said.

Wade turned abruptly to her son.

"Will you, Frank?" The younger man looked back and asked:

"What do *you* want to do with the boy?"

"Take him careering all over the world!" Mrs.

Barnes cried bitterly. "And make a vagabond of him for life!"

"No," Wade retorted quietly, "I'm growing tired of all that. I'm getting too old, and I want to stop. I want to take Amory and his mother out to a ranch in New Mexico, owned by a good friend of mine, who has two boys just Amory's age—where he'll learn to ride, and will live out of doors. I ask you to give him this one chance. You may find you won't miss him here. But if you do—in a few months—if you don't feel you can give him up, and the thing has got to come to court—I promise you I'll bring him back."

"I don't want your promises!" the angry, harsh old woman replied. "I've some rights here—and I've let your daughter stay here much too long as it is!"

"Let's think this over, Mother," said Frank.

"No!" she cried. "The boy stays here—where I know he's ours! And his mother gets right out tonight!" She turned again to Grandfather Wade. "And if you don't like it, you can bring suit—for the child and alimony, too! If you do, I'll take the stand! The lawyers used to tell me I was pretty good at that. Oh, I've been in fights enough—and I've won every suit I ever got into!"

"You'll lose here!" said Grandfather Wade. "You haven't any grounds for divorce!"

"We haven't, eh? Just you wait till I tell the jury of that night when she came home at sunrise! And then of the night when we found her here—being hugged and kissed by her gentleman friend! The chance she'll have when I get through won't be worth a doughnut!" She drew a noisy, quivering breath. "That's how it'll be—and there's only one question for you to decide. Do you want your girl held up like that, or will you get her out of here, while we're still giving you the chance?"

"Thank you," was Wade's answer. For a moment the quiet little man sat appalled at the sheer strength of her. In his whimsical way he had once told his daughter, "Ruth—I've mixed with cowboys, and Forty-Niners, Cossacks, bandits—and I always got on with 'em fine. But this mother-in-law of yours—she—frightens me! She's *too rough.*" And he felt like that for a moment now—until he faced the prospect of leaving Amory in her hands.

"If you put it like that," he said, "I'm afraid it will have to go to court—for we can't give him up without a fight."

Her big jaws snapped.

"Good! Then that's settled!"

But Frank broke in:

"No, it isn't settled!" His voice was low but sharp and strained, as he turned on her his angry eyes. He dreaded having this come into court. "You'll have to leave this to me!" he said. And turning to his father-in-law: "Suppose we let it wait a few days? This ranch proposition is new to me, and I want time to think it out."

"I'm glad," said Wade. "That's sensible, Frank —you think it over and I'll do the same." He rose to go, but turned at the door. "There's one thing more."

"What is it?"

"You know you can trust me, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Then let me take Amory out of this. He has seen and heard too much as it is. Tomorrow is Sunday—I'm just home—and he'll expect a little spree. I want to take him off for the day."

"Yes, I guess you do!" Frank's mother exclaimed. "And your precious daughter, too! And that's the last we'll see of the boy!"

"No, I'll leave his mother here—as a kind of a hostage, if you like. And I'll bring him back tomorrow night."

"All right," said Amory's father.

"Thank you. I'll be going now."

He left them and went to Amory's room, but found the small boy fast asleep—and after a little talk with Ruth, he said good night and went away.

CHAPTER SIX

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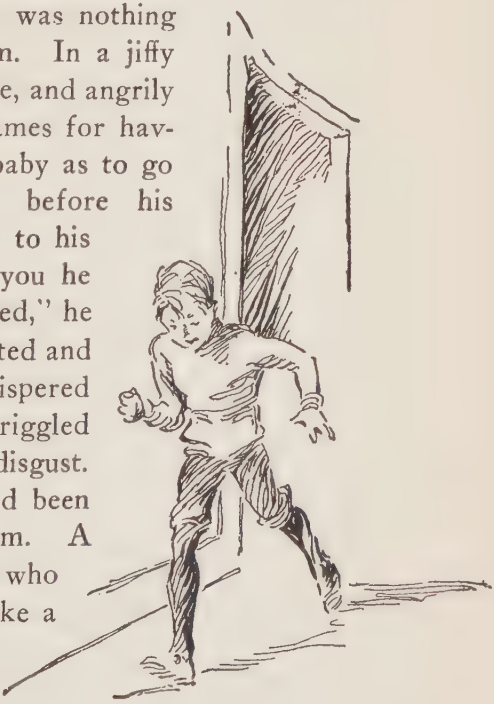
WHEN Amory opened his eyes the next morning it was so very early that there was only a little puddle of dim grey light upon the floor. But there was nothing dim inside of him. In a jiffy he was wide awake, and angrily calling himself names for having been such a baby as to go and fall asleep before his grandfather came to his room. "I'll bet you he came and whispered," he thought, "and waited and waited—and whispered again!" He wriggled sharply with disgust. The late hour had been no excuse for him. A darned poor scout who couldn't keep awake a little for such a friend! And this



was mighty important, you know! His grandfather might have wanted to tell him the whole plan for their "get-away." This last word he had recently learned from his fat boy friend, Joe Winston. It sounded fine. And as he repeated it several times, all his angry self-reproach was suddenly forgotten. "Our get-away—our get-away. How are we going to make it?" he asked. "Prob'ly in the dead of night. Yes, sir, that's our only chance! And he won't be here, he'll be down in the street—and when I hear his whistle, it will be all up to me!"

Amory decided he had better start practicing right away. So he lay there, barely breathing, planning out just what to do—and then very carefully, arm by arm and foot by foot, he got out from under the covers. Standing in bare feet on the floor, he looked back at his mother, still asleep. He could hear her long, slow breaths. So far, so good. Upon tiptoe he stole to the chair where he kept his clothes. On the way the floor gave a sharp, loud creak! And he almost yelled! But he stopped himself, waited a while and then stole on. It was pretty cold—and mighty shivery business now—because when you were naked, you had to pull on your underdrawers so slowly, slowly, leg by leg. When he was dressed, by habit he went to the washstand, and had almost started to

brush his teeth, when he caught himself at it and scowled with shame. You don't brush teeth in get-aways!

Now for the door. As he turned and started toward it, slowly and carefully tiptoeing still, the stronger light of the new day revealed to him his mother's face. All at once his whole throat grew horribly tight, and it took a hard effort to keep back the tears in his big, grey, shining eyes, which were so dilated now as to look three times too big for the boy. "Golly, but she'll be sorry!" he thought. But the next minute he forgot, for he grew breathlessly absorbed in the delicate job of coaxing the door to open without making a sound. He did it, though, and closed it, too, and drew a long breath of relief. Now to get by his grandmother's room. That was the hardest part of all —because, though he could not have put it in words, there had always been something haunting about his harsh old Grandmother Barnes. Her door was open—that was bad! But he heard her snoring—that was fine! "She's making such a racket she won't hear me—she won't hear me!" On tiptoe still, with bated breath, Amory got safely by. But then he just *couldn't* go slow any more! He scooted for the door to the landing—opened it—left it open—and went pellmell down the stairs.

When he came out on the street below, he stopped for a minute, breathing fast, and looked around. How strange it was! The light was strange, and the noises, too. With his sensitive ears, he knew the great city best by its sounds—although he would have stared at you, had you ever told him that. And at this hour so many were gone. There were only a few big ones now, a few loud footsteps, or the clatter of a wagon or a truck, and then queer, empty places in the city's world of sound. "Now where'll he be?" asked Amory. His eye lit on a small lunch room which kept open through the night. "That's it," he thought, "he'll be in there—and I'll go and we'll have breakfast there—to cheer us up!" The thought of a good hot breakfast took all the shivers out of the scheme. He started slowly toward the place; and he was so full of his secret now, and so proud of himself for his escape, that he positively strutted. With a conscious, self-important smile, he looked up into the faces of two Italians tramping by; and as a large milk truck came crashing and thundering along, to show his utter contempt for danger, Amory turned sharply out and strutted across right in front of it. "Holy Christ!" the driver yelled; and the big truck swerved —just missed him. But as the furious chauffeur turned in his seat and swore at the boy, Amory

cocked his head to one side and winked at him—then sauntered on.

But suddenly he thrilled again. For around the corner came Joe Winston. Joe was fat and he moved slowly, and he was like that inside of him, too. He was the one who, when taken up to the roof at dusk, had given one stupid look and said, "This is a hell of a place, this is." The remark had long rankled in Amory's mind. "Well," he thought now, with grim satisfaction, "I guess he won't think himself quite so smart, when he hears about our get-away, and all the cops are running 'round." Just where the cops would run to, Amory did not stop to think—but that Grandmother Barnes would instantly put the police upon his trail, he did not for a moment doubt. A picture of her flashed into his mind, running excitedly here and there, encouraging the cops in their search. "Golly, how she will sweat!" he thought. And while all this was going on, Joe, the poor fish, would stand mute with surprise. The picture was a pleasing one. And so, as his stout friend came up, Amory greeted him with a smile, mysterious and pitying. But Joe was not in the least impressed.

"Hello," he said. "Had your breakfast?"

"No."

"I have." Joe had already scored one. His

father worked on a ferry boat and the Winstons breakfasted early. "Say—it's Sunday," Joe went on. "How about goin' up to the Park?"

"Oh, I dunno," was the reply. Joe looked at him with compassionate scorn.

"Don't think you can make your get-away, eh?"

Get-away! The magic word set Amory's heart to thumping fast, and in another minute his secret might have burst right out. But, pulling a ball from his bulging coat pocket, Joe said, "Catch." And as they threw the ball back and forth, Amory's excitement cooled. Still, his mind was on bigger things than throwing a ball across the street; and so, when Joe again proposed a trip to the Park, and added, "What you afraid of—a lickin'?"—he replied with dignity:

"There ain't any licking can scare me."

Joe chuckled fatly.

"There ain't, ain't there? I'd just like to see your face when my Pa got busy on your pants."

But the taunt only brought a smile.

"He don't shoot pistols into your pants, does he?" Amory rejoined. Joe was scornful:

"Pistols! Huh!"

"Well, there's plenty of pistols where I guess I'll be some day—and plenty of cowboys with 'em,

too. And they shoot 'em just for fun at your pants --and make you dance to get out of the way."

"Say—who's been stringin' you? Been to the movies?"

"No—my grandfather's come home."

"All right, s'pose he has? What's he got to do with pistols?"

"He's got a whole lot to do with 'em. Where he's been, 'way over in Russia, the whole darned country is so full of guns and pistols goin' off, that you got to step lively to keep alive. But that don't scare *him* very much. He's used to it." Amory paused, and then he said, in a guarded tone, "He knows a good deal about cowboys, too."

"Huh!" said Joe. "I thought all your grandfather did was to walk around and listen to songs."

With a smile of condescension, Amory cocked his sandy head.

"You did, did you?"

"Yes, I did—and you've said it yourself—about enough times to make me sick! All he does is to look around for songs! And *they* ain't much!"

"They ain't—ain't they?" Over Amory's sensitive face came a flush of indignation, and before he could stop himself he said, "I may not be 'round here very long!"

"Where you goin'? In to breakfast?"

This little jibe was the last straw.

"No, I'm going out to a ranch—where there's about a million cows!"

"Is that so?" was the cheerful reply. "What you goin' to do with 'em? Milk 'em?"

"No, I ain't——"

"Is your grandfather goin' along?"

"You bet he is!"

"Then maybe your plan is to jest sit—an' ask the cows to sing for you."

"Huh!" was Amory's withering answer. "I guess you ain't very well acquainted with ranches, you poor fish!"

"Oh, I dunno. I was to the movies last Sunday night, with Pa and Ma—an' I guess I saw a ranch all right. There was cows enough to make you sick—and one big black one jabbed his horns right through a guy's stomach—raised hell with him. An' there I was, in the front row," said the fat boy complacently. "You don't need to tell me about cows—nor cow ranches neither."

"Well," said Amory darkly, "you may be surprised in a day or two."

"Oh, no I won't. You've give me all this talk before—an' I'm fed up with it," said Joe. "I'll

tell you what you're goin' to do. No cows or ranches in *your* life. You're goin' to be stuck right there"—and he pointed up to Amory's flat—"with that big grandmother of yours, who makes you go to bed at night when it's just barely dark down here."

"Is that so?" Amory's taunting laugh was all the louder from the fact that a cold little shiver had gone down his spine. Queer, how he always felt like that when Grandmother Barnes was mentioned. It made him feel so little, too. However, he was not really scared—and to show it he strutted a bit again, as he turned away from his callow friend and went back home to breakfast.

. . . . . .

But coming slowly up the stairs, he heard loud voices from the flat. Then he saw that the door on the landing was open, as he had left it. The voices grew louder, angrier, and Amory's heart began thumping again. He could hear both his parents now, but high above them, harsh and clear, he heard the voice of his Grandmother Barnes:

"And I say he's gone! The boy has cleared out—with that little sneak of a father of yours! And you know it! You're just lying—to give 'em time

to get away! Now, Frank, you go right to the 'phone and get Police Headquarters!"

At this, in a panic, Amory turned and was just about to bolt downstairs—when his mother, who was near the door, caught sight of him.

"There he is!" she exclaimed. And all at once she began to laugh at Grandmother Barnes, in a hard, excited way—while the older woman, looking grim, demanded of Amory as he came in:

"Well, young man, and where have you been?"

"Oh," he said softly, trying hard to keep his voice from sounding frightened, "I just went down to play catch with Joe Winston."

"Did, eh? See you don't do it again!" The old woman turned to Amory's mother: "Now when you're through with that laughing, my girl, suppose we get the breakfast!" And as they went into the kitchen, she added, "Maybe you won't laugh so hard before the day is over! You're to stay right here with me, understand, till the boy comes back!"

Breakfast was a grim affair. Amory's father finished quickly, as though in a hurry to get away. Although it was Sunday, he remarked that he had a lot of work at his office. Grandmother Barnes sat glum and silent. But this did not trouble Amory now—for his mother, just before they sat down, had told him that his Grandfather Wade was com-

ing to take him off for the day—the very thing he had hoped for! And tingling with gladness, he ate his oatmeal in large spoonfuls, quickly and excitedly. Once or twice he glanced up at the others, but then looked quickly down and went on. Let them be as queer as they liked; he was tired of it all. And it could not bother him any more, for the whole thrilling secret plan had all at once grown real again. It had not seemed really real last night; he had been forced to pretend a good deal, to make himself certain it would come off—for Grandmother Barnes appeared to be so stoutly and heavily sure of herself; and Grandfather Wade, so quiet and small, and with such uneasiness in his grey eyes. But now, by Golly, Grandfather Wade had showed already what he could do! Oh, the rogue, the rogue! With all his quiet, he had succeeded in getting Amory for the day! Off they would go to that secret island, camp like scouts, and plan and plan!

Now his mother was putting some lunch in a box, and bothering him about such fool things as his sweater and cap and overcoat; and the sound of her voice was a little strange.

"I'm not going with you today," she said.

"Aren't you? Well, we'll be all right," Amory answered cheerfully. And he did not see her wince

at that, for he was too busy with thoughts of his own. He was not at all disappointed to hear she was not going along. A secret island was no place for a boy's mother, anyhow—and he wanted Grandfather Wade alone, in order to plan their get-away. Every single part of it would have to be gone over and over, to be sure that it was right!

CHAPTER SEVEN

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THEY barely spoke to each other at first. On the El, on the way uptown, they sat silent, side by side, with the box of lunch and the ukulele. Amory's red sweater was still tied around his neck, for he had forgotten his mother's injunction to take it off when on the train. He had larger things to think about. The wisp of a boy and the little man were both sitting as quiet as mice—but stealing a look at his companion, Amory saw that Grandfather Wade was looking very anxious now. He looked mighty tired, too. "He prob'ly hasn't slept a wink—planing out our get-away," thought Amory; and his hand unconsciously contracted on his grandfather's

arm. The latter looked at him quickly then and slipped an arm around him. Amory asked softly:

"Have you been thinking out the trip?"

"Yes—I've been thinking," was the reply, "but I haven't thought it *out* just yet." The next moment he surprised and disappointed Amory by saying a most puzzling thing: "It depends a good deal on your father, you know."

Amory stared. What in the world did his father have to do with this? But Grandfather Wade began to ask questions. He wanted to know how much Amory saw of his father these days; if they ever had any fun together; and if when Amory got hurt, or felt very badly and cried, his father ever came to him.

"No, he never comes to me," said Amory. He was so bored with these queer questions and so impatient to get through, that he answered without hardly thinking. But his grandfather kept on:

"Don't you ever go to him, when you want anything—want it bad? And doesn't he ever help you get it?"

"No, it wouldn't do any good. I used to try it sometimes, but he said, 'Ask your grandmother.' She bosses him, I tell you—she can make him do whatever she likes!"

There was a little silence.

"She didn't want us to go today—but your father said we could."

"Did he? Well, that's funny—but this isn't a very big trip, you know. He'll never help us get away for that *great big* trip, if *she's* against it," Amory said. His pulse was beating faster now, for he was getting back to the plan. "I've been thinking how we could do it," he added.

"Do what?"

"Get away all by ourselves. We don't need anybody to help us."

"Let's hear your scheme," said Grandfather Wade; and Amory began to tell how he had slipped out of bed in the dark and escaped, that very morning. He grew quite excited as he talked; and, proud of himself for what he had done, he enlarged upon the dangers. All the time he could feel his companion's arm tighten slowly around him. "He'll say, 'Fine!' " thought Amory. But when he finished, once again his grandfather disappointed him.

"No," he said, "that isn't the way to do it at all. It must be very quiet, you know. Remember what I say, old scout. No matter what may happen, in the next few days or so, just try to take it quietly."

That anxious look had come back in his eyes.

But then, turning quickly with a smile—the old twinkling, roguish smile which Amory knew so well—he said:

"You know the best way to get quiet? Have a good time—this very day! Now what shall we do on the island?"

For a moment, Amory said not a word, but the twinkle in his own grey eyes showed his delight in this Grandfather Wade. The rogue, the rogue! Beginning so queer, he was all right now, and the day was not to be spoiled at all. They would have a wonder of a time! Amory began at once to tell what they could do on the island, and as he talked he tried to show what a regular outdoor scout he could be. He had been uneasy a minute ago, for his grandfather had acted as though he feared that Amory were too small for that big trip, and as though he were almost ready to give up the whole thrilling plan. So Amory tried to show him now. He talked like a very big boy, indeed, about the scout things they would do. And when at last they got off the El and walked to the little pier on the Sound, where they always went to hire a boat—and they picked out a nice blue one, and Grandfather Wade rowed out to the island—they lost no more time in foolish talk. Like scouts, at once they set to work. They hauled the boat

well up on the beach, so that the tide could not carry it off—then looked about, and Amory asked:

"Now where'd we better fix our camp?"

It was not a very big island—in fact, a very small one. But it had come to mean so much to Amory, in these last years, that though, of course, he knew it was small, and that this was only a *little* trip, still it gave him a tingling glow to be here again with Grandfather Wade. After all, it was mighty fine, you know! There were two clumps of bushes and trees—they always called them "jungles." And there was a little field—"the plateau," and three huge rocks that were "the cliffs," and another small place which was "the cove." They chose the cove as the spot for their camp and brought their things there from the boat. And then they went exploring for food. They kept apart, but from time to time a secret whistle sent the news. One whistle meant "nothing"—but two meant a "find"—and at this latter signal they came together to look at their booty. They found a good deal. Five big clams and some small russet apples and a little bunch of grapes—and then, near an old cabin where probably once a hermit had lived, they spied out an old potato patch and dug up four potatoes. All these things they brought to camp,

then gathered twigs and driftwood; and when they had built their fire up till it was roaring, Grandfather Wade cried:

"Now for a swim!"

Why not? A nice warm October day. Nobody but a mother would object to a swim on a day like this. So they took off their clothes and in they plunged. Golly! The water *was* pretty cold! But they only stayed in for a minute, you see, and that roaring fire they had made warmed them all up again in a jiffy. That was why they had built it first—for Grandfather Wade, the smart old rogue, knew just how to do such things! As they rubbed and slapped each other, Amory felt so good he wanted to shout! He looked at his little grandfather, naked. What muscles he had—small but just as hard as rock! And his skin was brown, all over! With a quick laugh, Amory cried:

"Grandfather Wade, you're a wonder! Gosh! Think—just think how old you are! You're over fifty—half a hundred! But you don't look old at all!"

And his young grandfather laughed at that, and grabbed Amory by the arms; and with all his quiet manner gone, and a strange, gay look in his eyes, he cried:

"We'll be young for a *thousand* years, my boy!"

And they did a regular dance on the beach—a perfectly wild one, with Indian whoops. Then they quickly put on their clothes, and baked the clams and the potatoes, washed the dusty little apples, got the lunch out of the basket, heated some cocoa, and ate and ate. When at last they were through and lay back on the sand, and Grandfather Wade had lit his pipe, into his grey eyes once more came the familiar twinkle.

"Well, we're quiet now," he said.

And looking back with the very same twinkle, Amory asked:

"Are we quiet enough to talk about our getaway?"

A change came on his companion's face.

"No, we're quieter even than that. We're so quiet we can feel that it's foolish to be worried too much over anything," said Grandfather Wade. He puffed his old black pipe for a moment. "You see, fellows like you and me can get along most anywhere. There are good times, and some hard ones, too. But you get through 'em all. They're never as hard as they seem at first. . . . Now about this trip of ours. We may start pretty soon, if your father agrees—but he may want us to wait a while. If he does, we won't mind it very much. We'll just keep quiet and wait for it—even if it's a good

many weeks—and we'll think of it now and then. Let's think of it now."

And so they did. Amory felt rather blue at the idea of waiting for weeks, but pretty soon his questions began coming thick and fast. He asked about the cowboys and their pistols and lassoes, bucking bronchos, Indians, robbers—all the people in the songs. And his grandfather said that some of them were still to be seen out there, but that the most exciting and dangerous things were no longer done. The cowboys were no longer wild; they didn't shoot their pistols much. And he spoke of the ranch house, snug and warm, with regular beds and even a bathroom; those two boys just Amory's age, their father and mother, the way they lived, the fine things they had for supper, the way they rode to school on ponies—all of which made the whole ranch life grow more and more real, and more and more safe.

Then he said, "We'll see it all some day—but we don't have to wait for that. Even if it should happen that we have to stay here in New York, we can have a lot of fun talking about it, and telling stories and singing songs. Do you want to hear some now?"

"Yes," said the boy. For though he was dis-

appointed to have it all becoming so vague, he was always ready to hear those songs; and sitting on the strip of beach, facing the golden autumn sun which hung hazy and soft in the western sky, he soon came under the spell of them.

The first was a very quiet song. His grandfather told of a hut made of sod, which stood alone on a wide, empty plain; and of a night he had spent inside, with a nice grizzly, shaggy old man, with big white eyebrows and grey hair, who cooked a fine rabbit stew for their supper. Then, while they were smoking their pipes, the old settler told his story. Grandfather Wade repeated it now; and at the end, in a low voice, he drifted quietly into this song:

I am looking rather seedy now while holding down my claim,
And my victuals are not always served the best;
And the mice play shyly round me as I nestle down to rest
In my little old sod shanty on my claim.

The hinges are of leather and the windows have no glass,
While the board roof lets the howling blizzards in,
And I hear the hungry cayote as he slinks up through the grass
Round the little old sod shanty on my claim.

There were some other verses, which put the whole story right into the song. It was all pretty

nice but rather sad; and so, when it was over, he sang a regular cowboy song:

Come along, boys, and listen to my tale,
I'll tell you of my troubles on the old Chisholm Trail.

Coma ti yi youpy, youpy ya, youpy ya,
Coma ti yi youpy, youpy ya.

I started up the trail October twenty-third,
I started up the trail with the 2-U herd.

Oh, a ten dollar hoss and a forty dollar saddle,—
And I'm goin' to punchin' Texas cattle.

I woke up one mornin' on the old Chisholm Trail,
Rope in my hand and a cow by the tail.

I'm up in the mornin' afore daylight
And afore I sleep the moon shines bright.

Last night I was on guard and the leader broke the ranks,
I hit my horse down the shoulders and I spurred him in the flanks.

The wind commenced to blow, and the rain began to fall,
Hit looked, by grab, like we was goin' to lose 'em all.

I jumped in the saddle and grabbed holt the horn,
Best blamed cow-puncher ever was born.

I popped my foot in the stirrup and gave a little yell,
The tail cattle broke and the leaders went to hell.

I don't give a damn if they never do stop;
I'll ride as long as an eight-day clock.

I herded and I hollered and I done very well,
Till the boss said, "Boys, just let 'em go to hell."

Oh, it's bacon and beans most every day—
I'd as soon be a-eatin' prairie hay.

I'm on my best hoss and I'm goin' at a run,
I'm the quickest shootin' cowboy that ever pulled a gun.

Coma ti yi youpy, youpy ya, youpy ya,
Coma ti yi youpy, youpy ya.

On and on the verses went, as the great herd like an army moved slowly up the Chisholm Trail, marching by day and sleeping at night, with cowboy sentinels all around. And Amory loved this song so well that when it was ended they talked it all over. Then they forgot the cowboys a while, and Grandfather Wade began to tell of a little hunchback Indian who lived with his people out on the plains. He was so crooked and ugly and short that the foolish Indian boys and girls, and even some of the grown-ups, too, made fun of him. And this was all wrong—for inside his twisted body was a spirit which made beautiful songs. When the sun was getting low, he would come away from the wigwams and, squatting alone on the desert, would look up the path of light that led away for millions of miles to the palace of the Sun God; and up this shining golden path he would quietly send this song:

Hoi-a-hoi-a-hoi-a-hoi-a
Hoi-a-hoi-a-hoi-a-hoi-a-a-hoi.

Just one word, over and over, but the music was so wonderful it made you tingle deep inside. Grand-

father Wade was squatting now, in the regular Indian way, and he looked almost as though he himself were that very Indian. His eyes fixed on the great ball of gold in the west, from his ukulele came strange soft chords, and the verses of his song went like birds one after the other up the shining path of light. And though the song was by no means gay, Amory felt so quiet and happy that he barely breathed at all. When it was over, there was a long silence. Then Amory whispered:

"Let's have another."

And his grandfather went on. He told the story and sang the song of an old miner alone in the hills—and then a more exciting one—of "the days of old, when we dug out the gold, in the days of Forty-nine." Then he sang about the "bullwhacker" who drove a team on the Red Cloud Line, and could "lick any son of a gun that will yoke an ox to mine." And as Amory listened, the pictures came —of the oxen dragging heavy carts and great "prairie schooners" over the plains. After that came a splendid, thrilling song about Bill Peters driving his stage on a mad tear down a mountain road, with the bullets whistling 'round his head. Some of the verses went like this:

The Hunter's Moon

When Bill's stage 'u'd bust a tire,
  Or something 'u'd break down,
He'd hustle 'round and patch her up
  And start off with a bound;
And the wheels o' that old shack o' his
  Scarce ever touched the ground.

And Bill didn't 'low no foolin',
  And when Injuns hove in sight
And bullets rattled at the stage,
  He druv with all his might;
He'd holler, "Fellers, give 'em hell!
  I ain't got time to fight!"

Then the way them wheels 'u'd rattle,
  And the way the dust 'u'd fly,
You'd think a million cattle,
  Had stampeded and gone by;
But the mail 'u'd get thar just the same,
  If the horses had to die!

This led, of course, to Jesse James:

Jesse James was a lad that killed many a man;
  He robbed the Danville train;
But that dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard
  Has laid poor Jesse in his grave.

It was Robert Ford, that dirty little coward,
  I wonder how he does feel,
For he ate of Jesse's bread and he slept in Jesse's bed,
  Then laid poor Jesse in his grave.

The Hunter's Moon

Jesse was a man, a friend to the poor,
He never would see a man suffer pain;
And with his brother Frank he robbed the Chicago bank,
And stopped the Glendale train.

It was his brother Frank that robbed the Gallatin bank,
And carried the money from the town;
It was in this very place that they had a little race,
For they shot Captain Sheets to the ground.

They went to the crossing not very far from there,
And there they did the same;
With the agent on his knees, he delivered up the keys
To the outlaws, Frank and Jesse James.

It was on Wednesday night, the moon was shining bright,
They robbed the Glendale train;
The people they did say, for many miles away,
It was robbed by Frank and Jesse James.

It was on Saturday night, Jesse was at home
Talking with his family brave,
Robert Ford came along like a thief in the night,
And laid poor Jesse in his grave.

The people held their breath when they heard of Jesse's death,
And wondered how he ever came to die.
It was one of the gang called little Robert Ford,
He shot poor Jesse on the sly.

Jesse went to his rest with his hand on his breast;
The devil will be upon his knee.
He was born one day in the county of Clay,
And came from a solitary race.

This song was made by Billy Gashade,
As soon as the news did arrive;
He said there was no man with the law in his hand
Who could take Jesse James when alive.

As Grandfather Wade was singing this song—although there was nothing to be afraid of, because those days were all gone by—it was mighty exciting all the same, especially when you remembered that very soon you yourself would be going right out to those places in the West! Amory barely listened now. He was thinking again of their get-away. Why did his grandfather keep putting it off? He wanted so to talk it out. For as he listened to all these songs, Amory had begun to feel what a big promise he had made—to go 'way out where it was so wild! But as he thought about it now, he mustered his courage, grew glad again. Not many exciting things left out there? Amory almost laughed aloud! For he knew that the minute he got to that ranch, those two boys would start right in to tell of the secret games they played. No matter whether the stage-coach was gone, and Jesse James was in his grave, and the cowboys and the Indians didn't shoot their pistols much! Couldn't Amory and those two other boys *pretend* that all this was happening still? Right in the very places, too, the deserts and the canyons, where they had happened

long ago! Think of a whole canyon for three small boys on an afternoon!

And instead of spoiling everything, it would be pretty nice, he thought, to have that ranch house to go to at night, for good hot suppers and perhaps some games of Parchesi or Old Maid. For all this made it so safe and real—just as the roofs had always been, back where Amory lived in New York. No, not always—the roofs had once been a mighty scarey place for him—till Grandfather Wade came and made them all right. . . . The nice thing about Grandfather Wade was that no matter how splendidly and terribly thrilling a thing could be, he always made it safe and real—while Grandmother Barnes, on the other hand, could take the dullest, most tiresome things and make them unreal and scarey and queer!

He shivered at the thought of her; and sharply came the realization that soon they would have to be going back to those rooms where all the trouble was. Already the sun was sinking low. If they were really to make their plans, they had better get at it pretty quick! So, in a long silence which followed a song, he decided to try once more. When he turned to speak, he saw at once that his Grandfather Wade was watching him in a way that looked very much indeed as though he, too, were thinking

it out. And this gave Amory courage, and in a soft, clear voice he asked:

"Now how about that trip of ours?"

His grandfather gave a little start.

"Still thinking of that?" he inquired.

"Yes——"

"All this time while I've been singing?"

"Yes," said Amory, very low, "the songs were all about it, weren't they?"

Again there was a silence.

"You must give me time," said Grandfather Wade.

"Will my mother come with us?"

"Yes, she'll come—if—when we go. But, you see, it depends a good deal on your father."

"No, it doesn't!" Amory cried. He was sick of this talk about his father. "I tell you, it's Grandmother Barnes!" he said. "She's the one who'll try to spoil it all. If we wait for her to let us go, we'll *never* go! She just hates trips! And she doesn't like songs—or canyons! She calls them trash, I tell you!" His voice quivered and the tears were rising hotly in his eyes. "Once, when I was singing a song about a canyon, she said, 'Stop that trash this minute!' And another time she said to me, 'Leave songs to the hurdy-gurdy man!' "

"Did she?" answered Grandfather Wade. "A

good many people feel like that. Leave songs to the hurdy-gurdy man. And so nearly all the songs they hear come from big song factories. Your grandmother is right about them—nearly all such songs are trash. For you can't make a good song that way—you must do it because you really feel it. . . . Do you know how they do in India? There aren't many newspapers over there, so when a man has something he wants all the people to know about—something that he really feels—he makes a song about it. And thousands and thousands of singers go all over India—over the plains, along the great rivers and up the grand big mountain sides—singing and singing, day and night. They like these singers over there and treat them almost like holy men. Even the poorest peasant will give them food and a place to sleep. 'Now please sing us some songs,' he will say. And the songs begin, and that same day it will be the same in villages all over India. Thousands of fellows singing—millions of people listening. And," said Grandfather Wade very softly, "they are doing that right now."

Amory felt a sharp, warm thrill. This very minute! Think of it! Millions!"

"And songs have got to be like that," his grandfather continued. "You must really feel what you sing. You must really love someone, or be

really sad, or really and truly jolly, or angry—and the song just grows up out of that."

In the silence which followed, Amory chuckled all at once; for there had popped into his head a very funny picture—of Grandmother Barnes when she found they'd escaped her. Would *she* be angry? You bet your sweet life! So she really ought to sing a song. But the only one she could make up sounded like a perfect bellow! It was funny—for an instant. But when his companion inquired what had made him chuckle so, and Amory began to tell, the funniness quickly died away—for Grandfather Wade did not laugh at all. His face got suddenly queer again.

"I wouldn't try to make fun of her. She's mighty good to you," he said. "And I'd try to like her, if I were you. You may have to be with her for some time. Think of those fine suppers she gives you. Not many boys get suppers like that. And let me tell you, it's no easy job to keep things always so nice and clean. And when you get a cut or bruise, think how kind she is to you. I don't think it's fair, when she does all that, not to try your best to be happy there. Just try to be nice to her, old scout, and don't ever bother her with any songs. You can sing a song easily, all to yourself, without ever making a sound. I do, often—on a train or a trolley

car, or right in a room. And so can you. Think of that Chipmunk Song you made—all by yourself, while I was gone."

So Grandfather Wade went quietly on. But Amory was not listening now; he was thinking about Grandmother Barnes—of the looks in her big harsh face, and the tones in her heavy voice, that had so often frightened him. And these memories crept into his eyes, and brought a look which his companion suddenly noticed. He watched the small boy a moment and said:

"You'd be pretty lonely, wouldn't you, if we ever had to leave you there?"

"Yes!" was the whispered sharp reply.

"And so," said his grandfather softly, "at last your father would give in."

Amory shot a quick, puzzled look. What did his grandfather mean by that? He had said it as though he were thinking out loud.

"What do you mean?" asked Amory.

"I mean I don't worry now at all," was the answer, in that quiet voice. "There's nothing for us to worry about. We may not be able to go right away—but we will go—and don't you forget it. So let's not bother about it now. . . . Suppose you sing that song again, the one you made while I was gone."

And when—after several efforts to start, and fail-

ing, because it took some time to get Grandmother Barnes out of his head—Amory sang the Chipmunk Song—his companion nodded his head; and when it was finished, he declared:

"That settles it—it's just as I said. No boy who can make a song like that can ever stop making 'em again—inside of himself—wherever he is. And think of the things you have already inside of you, to put into songs. This fire and this island—that big black steamer going by—our swim today and the dance we had and all our exploring—all stuff for a song—which you could call, The Song of the Scouts. And then back in New York, your friend Joe Winston would make a fine fat song, I think. And the roofs, of course, and all the things you've seen and heard and done up there. I tell you, I don't worry at all. I know now I can count on you. No matter what anyone tells you to do, you will go on making songs to yourself. And what's more, pretty soon you will do it with me. You belong out of doors, making songs with me—and that is exactly what we'll do—if not now, later. Remember, old scout, that if I have to leave you for a while, I'll come back—and I'll find a way to take you with me out to the West. I'll never, never leave you for good."

He got up quietly and said:

"But I guess we had better be going home now."

"Oh, it isn't very late!" said Amory. But it was, and he knew it. The dusk had come. The shadows were dark in the bushes behind them, and out on the Sound a jolly little lighthouse was flashing a big white gleam of light. He asked, "Why not stay and camp all night?" But he knew they couldn't, really; and so, when his grandfather said, "Not now"—he did not press it, but instead he clutched at the next idea he could find, to put off the dreaded departure. He said:

"Then let's wait for the moon to rise. *Please* let's do that! *Please,* Grandfather Wade!"

He showed he wanted it so hard that his grandfather soon gave in.

"All right," he agreed, "we'll wait for that. It's only a few minutes now."

So they built up the fire and settled back again on the sand; and while they waited, Grandfather Wade took up his ukulele and sang one of Amory's favorite songs. In fact, he had made it for Amory. It was about the Hunter's Moon—"the moon for scouts like you and me." Under summer moons, on soft, warm nights, most anyone liked to be out of doors—but in autumn only a few stayed out, and of them the song was sung. "While all the other people," it said, "go crowding into stuffy rooms—we are the fellows who stay out of doors. The ones who hate to go home to bed—who love to stay out

in the dark, still night—listening with all our ears —for the songs that come stealing out of the dark— from the streams and the meadows, the shadowy woods—with the rising of the Hunter's Moon. We do it all over the world, you know—for fellows like us are everywhere. So in fall, when the great, round moon appears—remember us. You may be sure— that out on the seas and in every land—high up in the mountains, down in the plains—and on the roofs of cities—we shall all be listening."

He finished. The two small shadows sat there motionless on the sand. They saw the silvery glow in the east grow brighter, steadily brighter. And when, so very quietly, the big, round, golden moon appeared over the distant edge of the world and started up into the heavens—Amory saw on his grandfather's face a look as though he were listening to songs from very far away. And Amory thought he heard them, too. He barely breathed. He was smiling now. It was mighty fine, you know!

CHAPTER EIGHT

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In the rowboat, it was still pretty fine. Over the Sound, in the twilight, had come immense shadowy places, with specks of moving, twinkling lights, white and yellow, red and green. From a far-distant steamer came a long-drawn-out "Ooh-ooh." And the little waves kept slapping the boat; the air smelt nice and salty and rough; and a huge black tug with a long string of dark and ghostly barges passed. On one of them were a boy and a dog, who waved and barked at Amory. He shouted back, "Hello, there!" And he was just beginning to picture how fine it must be to live on a barge—

when suddenly they came to the land. And the minute he stepped on the shore, he began to have the dismal sense of all the day's fun being over now. He was going back to Grandmother Barnes.

On the El, it was still worse. For though Grandfather Wade was talking still of the trips they were to take "some day," Amory was not fooled for a minute. He was going home, and all this talk was just for the purpose of making him ready to *stay* at home, for weeks and weeks, or even years. That "some day" had a hopeless sound. So Amory sat very still. He was feeling drowsy now. His eyes and his limbs grew so heavy that he could barely keep awake; and when they came to their station, it was all he could do to get up from his seat and follow his grandfather out of the train—down into the noisy, familiar street, where only that morning he had planned so splendidly for their "get-away." He didn't want any "get-away" now. He wanted to snuggle into his bed.

When they came up the stairs to his flat, Amory noticed one good thing. There were no angry voices there. But when they went in, and he caught sight of his mother and of Grandmother Barnes, all sleepiness abruptly left him; for the look in their faces

and eyes was just as queer as ever—worse! Grandmother Barnes said not a word. She just glared at them, for being so late.

"Come, dear," said Amory's mother. "You'd better pop right into bed, and let me bring your supper there."

They went into his room, and she shut the door. And drearily he began to undress.

. . . . . .

In the meantime, little Grandfather Wade sat very quietly looking up at the big heavy face of Grandmother Barnes, who, as soon as the others left the room, had begun to talk to him.

"Well," she said, "it's settled now. You're to take your daughter away tonight."

She looked to see him start at that, but to her disappointment he remained just as before. It was as though Grandfather Wade had brought all the quiet he had found, out on the secret island, into the strident tension here.

"How have you settled it?" he asked.

"I've done two things," was her harsh reply. "Cooped up in here with your daughter all day, I've made her feel she can't stay any more—that we two can't live in the same rooms. She said to me,

only an hour ago, 'If I stay another night, I'll go mad!' So that is settled! Out she goes!"

John Wade still looked up at her.

"What's the other thing you have done?" he asked.

"Frank has been here, and gone," she said. "And he has left all this to me. You're not to take Amory on this trip—or any trip. That's in *my* hands. I've made Frank see I've some rights here—that I've worked and slaved for this child for years—to give him a decent bringing up, and keep him out of the poorhouse—while all your precious daughter did was to gad about and throw money away, and let other men make love to her! A fine mother she has been! I brought Frank to his senses quick enough!" She looked at Ruth's father with contempt. "When you talked to him last night, and set out to bamboozle him, I could have told you," said Grandmother Barnes, "that you were only wasting time——"

"No—I don't think I was wasting time."

"You weren't, eh? Then maybe you think that when I say he has left it to me, I'm lying!"

"No—I don't think that. I believe every word you have said. And I'm not surprised," he answered. "I was afraid Frank would feel that way, after *you* had talked to him. But when I was with

him last night I was looking ahead, you see, to how he may feel when we are gone—and I wanted to put some things in his mind that he will remember then."

She gave a sharply puzzled glance.

"He won't remember very much. I'll see to that," she answered. Then, after another puzzled frown—for she did not understand this odd and whimsical little man—"Now suppose you come down from the clouds," she said, "and face the facts. You're to take your daughter away tonight, and you're to leave Amory here with me." As for a moment he failed to reply, she added, "Surely you're not such a fool as to try to take him out by force."

A faint smile went over his face.

"You'd fight that, wouldn't you?" he said.

"I certainly would!"

"And you're bigger than I. I don't believe we'd better try."

"Then," she asked, with that same gleam of puzzled curiosity, "what is it that you mean to do? Hire a lawyer and bring suit? Take my word for it—save your money! You don't want your girl held up in court when you're bound to fail—and fail you will! Mind you, it isn't divorce we're after —it's only separation we need, giving Frank the

custody of the child. That's all we want, and we can get it!"

"Yes," he said, "I guess you're right." Then, after a little silence: "And I'll take Ruth away tonight—as soon as Amory is asleep."

"Good," she replied, but still with distrust. "And the farther away, the better," she said.

"No—we won't leave the city yet."

In an instant she was all alert.

"Why won't you? Do you think for a minute that I'll let you visit him here?"

"No," he said, "I don't think that. I think you will keep him all to yourself—afraid to let him out of your sight."

"Then why will you stay in town?" she demanded.

He did not answer this at once. He sat there for a moment quietly thinking about her, instead. She seemed to him a tragic figure. In spite of all her health and force, her shrewdness and her grabbing, all her life she had failed and failed to get any happiness. And so it would probably be to the end. In business she would help her son to force it slowly up and up, until at last they could afford to get a good, substantial home. There, when they were prosperous, Frank might even marry again; and so would come the grandchildren that his mother wanted so. But she would not make them

love her. No, she would fail in that again; and jealous, no doubt, of his new wife, harsh and lonely, she would grow old, not even knowing what was wrong.

"What are you waiting for, I say!" her hard, incisive voice cut in. "Why are you going to stay in New York? What have you in mind that concerns this boy? If you've anything at all to say, it's high time you were saying it!"

He looked at her and saw again a gleam of disappointment—as though she had expected a fight, and were sorry that he had given in so easily. He answered:

"I'm thinking, when we leave Amory here, what a bitter time it will be—for both of you. Because you'll fail with him, you see—as you failed with Frank." She bristled up.

"I've failed with Frank?"

"I think you have. He isn't very happy, you know. And he won't be—nor will Amory. There's too much of his mother, and of me, inside of the boy," said Grandfather Wade.

"Yes, you've done a lot of harm—with all the rubbish you've put in his head! But I'll soon put a stop to that!"

"Yes, you'll try, as you did with Frank—but then, I think, you are going to find that you've got to

put something else in its place. Frank was different, he was a man, and you gave him a load of business worries that filled his life. But you can't do that with Amory—he's still a very little boy. And he'll be right here under your eyes. He'll look thin, lonely, miserable. Because you really care for him, you'll try your best to feed him up. It won't be enough. You'll scold him, lecture him, make him work. But *that* won't do. You'll try to cuddle him, but you'll find that he is afraid of you. He's a *queer* little lad, whom you don't understand. Don't you remember how sick and thin and nervous he got, three years ago? For weeks and weeks you couldn't find what was the cause of his being like that. It was a scare he had had on the roofs."

"He'll never go up *there* again!"

"Yes, I know—you'll keep him down. And you won't even let him out on the streets, for fear his mother might find him there. And here in these rooms with you and Frank—both of you unhappy—he'll shrink quickly into himself and begin to droop and pine—till you both get sick of the sight of him."

"I will, will I?" she angrily cried.

"Oh, you may hold out for a while—but Frank will soon want to let him go. I'll be seeing Frank

at his office, you know—and at last he'll ask you to give the boy up."

"I won't do it, I tell you! It shan't be done!"

"Perhaps you wouldn't," he agreed, "if the child were all you'll have in your life. But he won't be—you'll have so much else. You're a smart woman, Mrs. Barnes. All your life you've been working hard and reaching out for what you want—a good, substantial home and business. You were doing finely until my daughter came along—and now that you are rid of her, your life will grow much simpler here. You'll be able to cut expenses down—and while you are saving money, Frank will soon be making more. You'll keep all his thoughts on his business, of course; you'll both throw yourselves into it hard. And with all the new interests and plans and business worries that will come, you won't have time for Amory—not if he's so miserable that he demands your constant care. You'll see that this one small boy, whom we've spoiled, and who is growing sick and thin, isn't worth such thankless pains. So you'll turn to Frank, whom you understand—and when he wants to let Amory go, in the end you will agree. You won't risk keeping Frank unhappy here, with this child who reminds him always of Ruth. So you'll give him up—and with Amory gone, you'll

go on building Frank's career. You'll get the respectable home of your dreams—and then, when you see Frank lonely still, you may look around to get him a wife."

"God forbid!" cried Grandmother Barnes. He smiled at her.

"Not like Ruth," he said. "She wasn't your choice. Frank did his own choosing, in those days. But by the time I speak of, I think you'll have him in your hands—and I think you'll *want* a wife for him—one of *your* choosing, understand—because it would make him happier, and would bring you at last the grandchildren that you have wanted all these years—not like Amory, but the kind of practical little boys and girls whom you can train to grow sensible, keen—without any danger of any songs or foolish dreams getting into their heads."

Over the face of Grandmother Barnes had come a look of grim surprise and arrested curiosity. He looked at her quietly and said:

"That's the way I think it will be with you. You will be able to do as you like, so long as you confine yourself to the kind of people you understand. But you don't understand this little boy—and he'll be in the way of all your plans—and so you'll give him back to me." He paused for a moment, and added,

"It would be so much kinder to him, if you would only do it now."

He saw the instant change on her face. Just for a few moments, she had been taken off her guard; her attention had been caught and held by his picture of her future life. But coming back to the present now, her heavy features tightened, and with an ironic smile, she asked:

"Kind? To give him up to you—and let him grow up a vagabond?"

"No—I don't want him to be like me. I'm like this present age, you know—unsettled, groping in the dark. I want him to be like the new generation which I'm hoping will arise—which will find itself and sink new roots deep into the earth, and grow strong again. I want him to grow up on a ranch—where his restless young spirit can quiet down and his small body can grow strong." He waited. There was no reply. "Sooner or later," he added, "I'm sure that you will let him come." Again he waited. Then he asked, "Won't you let me have him now?"

In a low, vibrant voice she answered:

"No—I won't let you have him——"

"Frank won't want him here."

"But I will!"

"Not when you find how unhappy he'll be."

"He won't be—once we're rid of you!" Her big, hard face looked angry now, for Grandfather Wade had roused in her the old tormenting self-distrust, had spoiled the triumph of this night. And what he said next made her angrier still.

"But you won't be rid of us. We'll be here still—inside of him—in his memories."

"I'll root them out!"

"You can't! They're deep! It's too late, I tell you—this small boy is spoiled for you! Even if he forgets us, the songs and dreams will still be there!"

"I'll take my chance with *them!*" she cried. "And I'm sick and tired of all this talk! I want you to take your daughter and go!"

Grandfather Wade rose from his chair.

"Very well—we'll wait and see—if you must have it so," he said. "There's nothing left to talk about. On one thing, you and I are agreed. I want to get away from here just as quietly as I can. Amory has had scenes enough."

"Yes," she said, "and so have I. But how about that daughter of yours?"

"Does Ruth know Frank has left this in your hands?"

"Yes, and she proposes to see a lawyer!"

"She won't do that—not after I have talked to her. And if you will pack her clothes and belongings, I'll come for them tomorrow," he said, "while Amory is away at school."

"All right, that's sensible," she agreed.

"I'll go in and say good night to him now."

But as he made a move to go, she stopped him.

"What will you tell him?" she asked.

"Nothing to excite him. I know he's very drowsy now, and he will soon be fast asleep."

"Very well—leave him like that, if you want to. But when you come back tomorrow, don't think you can stay till he's home from school. This is your last talk with him, understand." With a faint smile he shook his head, and it brought back her anger. "You don't think so! But I know! And I say the kindest thing to the child is to tell him now and have it over!"

"No!" was his sharp, low reply.

"All right, then I'll tell him myself, tomorrow!"

"Don't do that! You'll make it harder, a thousand times—not only for him but for yourself!"

"Look here! Who's running this?"

"Very well."

"And Grandfather Wade went to Amory's room.

. . . . . .

Amory had finished his supper and had been tucked into his bed. He had been up since early dawn, and he was very tired now. Golly, how sleepy it made you feel to be out of doors the whole day long. The drowsiness pressed down on him. He yawned and yawned. His mother sat quietly by his side, not talking or singing, just stroking his head. She was certainly loving him tonight, and drowsily he wondered why. It was mighty nice, you know. But he couldn't keep awake much longer. In a few minutes Grandfather Wade would be coming in to say good night; and then at last, thank goodness, Amory's heavy eyes could close. His troubles were all forgotten now; there was nothing in the whole wide world but drowsiness.

So, when his grandfather came, Amory yawned again and said:

"Gosh, but I'm sleepy!"

"Are you? Fine." Grandfather Wade sat down by his bed, and Amory's mother went out of the room. "A pretty big day, wasn't it?"

"You bet it was——"

"And we'll have more." Then, at another prodigious yawn, he smiled at Amory and said, "Poor old scout, I didn't want to keep you awake—but I guess I'll have to now—just for a couple of min-

utes or so. There's something we've got to think about. . . . I've been talking to Grandmother Barnes, you see, about that great, big trip of ours. And she is against it, just as you said."

"I knew she would be," Amory whispered. At the mention of her name, he had felt something jump inside.

"She wants you here. There's your school, you know. So you mus'n't let it worry you if we have to wait a while. We need time to get ready, anyway. For a great, big trip like that, you've got to buy a lot of things. And that's what I'll be doing."

"What kind of things?"

"Oh, clothes, and a saddle, and maybe a gun—and fishing tackle—a good *many* things. We'll use my room at the hotel to keep them in, when they come from the stores. And, to make it easier to get just the clothes you need, I'm going to take your mother there and let her stay with me a while."

Amory gave him a quick look.

"What do you mean? Sleep there, too?"

"Oh, I guess so. You see, old scout, I want her there—just as I wanted you today. I get kind of lonesome, all by myself."

"But look here," in a puzzled, frightened tone,

"why can't I go and stay there, too?" A pause. Then, very softly, "Don't you—don't you want me, too?"

Another little silence.

"Yes—I want you—very much. And I mean to have you, too. But these things can't be done in a minute, you see—and we've got to be fair to Grandmother Barnes. She wants you here. You're her boy, too."

"I'm *not* her boy—I don't like her, I tell you!" His voice quivered, but in reply came a steady pressure on his hand.

"Steady, old scout," his grandfather said. "Remember what I told you. When things get a little hard, just you be quiet as you can—and almost before you know it, you'll find they will get easy again." But the tears were coming in Amory's eyes.

"How long will it be?"

"I don't know yet—but I guess it won't be very long. And remember all the stories and songs and trips we have to think about. That was a big time today. Just think of that now—and go to sleep."

But Amory clutched his grandfather's hand.

"Will you come back tomorrow?" he asked.

"No—not quite so soon as that."

"When, then?"

For a moment Grandfather Wade did not reply.

"I'll tell you about that," he said. "Your grandmother doesn't want us here—and she's right about it, too. She doesn't get on with us very well, so it's better for us to stay away. But we'll be right here in New York, you know, getting ready for the big trip to the ranch—and you don't want to forget that for a minute. Your Grandmother Barnes may tell you that you're not going on the trip—or even, she may even say you're not to see us any more. But you mus'n't mind all that she says. I don't mean that she'll be lying—but people sometimes make mistakes—and that's how it will be with her—until she finds that she is wrong. So whatever she tells you about the trip, you just keep thinking, 'She's mistaken'—and be quiet as you can. I know it's hard on you, old scout—but there are so many hard things in this world—and if you just keep quiet, lay low—the first thing you know, they'll be left behind."

While he had been saying this, Grandfather Wade had leaned over the bed, with Amory's hand still held in his; and his voice had a slow, drowsy sound, as though he were putting somebody to sleep. It grew lower and lower. Amory thought that his grandfather kept repeating, "Quiet—quiet—just as quiet as you can." And it made him a little angry. For he knew he was unhappy—and he wanted to

keep awake—and talk some more—and find out what was meant by all this. But the voice kept pressing his thinking down—like a firm hand placed upon his thoughts, and soothing all his troubles away. So the lids of his eyes grew heavier—heavier and heavier—until, with a sudden yawn—and then a tired little sigh—everything faded into the dark.

CHAPTER NINE

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When Amory woke up the next morning, his mother was not in the bed, and at first this gave him quite a shock. Where had she gone? He couldn't remember much of what his grandfather had said. Only one thing he knew—they had gone away! But then he remembered something else—they had gone to get ready for the big trip, to buy the things. Well, that was good. And moreover, as he lay thinking of what he would do, out on the ranch, presently it felt pretty good to have the bed all to himself; for when he thought of things in bed, he liked to be able to wriggle about. He couldn't do that when his mother was here; he always had to lie perfectly still, until she awoke at seven o'clock. That had been very tiresome. And besides, his

mother's awakening had always been unpleasant, too, for the way it invariably happened was this. Grandmother Barnes, who got up at six, would come abruptly in at seven and shut the window in Amory's room; and she would shut it with such a bang that Amory's mother woke up with a start. Once she had said sharply:

"I wish you would let *me* do that!"

But Grandmother Barnes had answered:

"If I did, you wouldn't do it till noon!"

Since then, though nothing had been said, it had been an angry little minute at the beginning of each day. This morning was much pleasanter. Grandmother Barnes came in quietly and said, in a kind, friendly voice:

"Hello, sonny. You awake?"

"Yes'm."

"That's good," she replied. "It's a shame, the way you've had to lie here when you wanted to get up. After this, I'll come in at six, and get the room all nice and warm, so you can sit up and do as you like. You can have your books and games in bed."

This was mighty good news, you know! He answered softly:

"That will be fine."

She patted him awkwardly and said:

"You bet it will. You'll find it pretty nice here

now, you poor little kid. Now jump up and dress yourself."

As he did so, he remembered that his grandfather had said, "Your Grandmother Barnes is kind to you." And she certainly was. She was all right when Amory's mother wasn't around. At breakfast, she gave him four big waffles, with all the syrup he wanted, too. His father was already gone, for it was a little late; and Amory was soon hurrying off, with his grandmother, to school. And school was all right—the same as ever. Pretty tiresome, of course—but when, during the recess, Joe Winston tried to trip him up, he succeeded in sending Joe head over heels, right in front of a lot of boys, by a trick his Grandfather Wade had shown him. And this incident was not only very pleasing in itself—it also set him to thinking of Grandfather Wade and the ranch out there, and the tricks he would show to those two boys. When school was over, his grandmother came to get him, as she had done for weeks. Amory never liked this—it gave Joe Winston a chance to joke. But today, on the way home, she stopped at a small toy store and bought a bank for Amory—a regular cash register, with a bell which rang each time that you pulled the lever down. The idea of saving money had always seemed dull to him before; but this

was such an attractive, interesting little bank that when his grandmother talked to him about earning nickels and dimes to put in, he did not mind it in the least. Moreover, he suddenly told himself, "Of course I've got to save some money—to buy things for that trip of ours!" So, at home, when she gave him some shoes to shine, Amory worked with such a will that in less than no time he had dropped a ten-cent piece into the bank. He pulled the lever and rang the bell.

"There's music for you," said Grandmother Barnes. "There's a sound I like to hear. It means a future, little man."

He did not know what she meant by that, nor did he care. But he asked her what else he could do, and he was soon polishing a big brass jar that she used for a plant. He earned ten cents more that afternoon, and barely even noticed that he had missed his chance to go to the school playground. As for his mother and Grandfather Wade, Amory could not miss them now, because while he worked he was with them in fancy, flying away to the great Southwest. Supper that night was a nice, quiet meal. His father was tired and barely spoke; but the nervous look on his face was gone, and he even smiled at Amory, on hearing how good he had been that day. After supper, they let him alone. His father

took up his evening paper; his grandmother cleaned the supper away. Amory got his favorite book and began to read slowly to himself. This wasn't so nice—for he was not much of a reader yet, and on other nights his mother had read aloud, with her arm around him. He missed her low, rich, musical voice and her big, black, smiling eyes. So he put down the book pretty soon, and he felt a little lonely. Then Grandmother Barnes came in and saw him. She took the book and began to read. She was not very good at it; her voice was heavy and you could feel that she didn't really enjoy it at all. So Amory grew drowsy. All at once he noticed that she had stopped. He looked up quickly and caught her watching him with an anxious frown. For a moment she seemed about to start talking of something very important.

"Look here, sonny," she began. But then with a smile she added, "No—I guess you're too sleepy for talking now. The place for you, my boy, is bed."

And there, when she had tucked him in and left him, Amory shut his eyes. And the pictures came—of the wide plateau beneath the stars, the shadowy herds of cattle brought together for the night, the cowboys on their ponies circling slowly 'round and 'round. And he heard faintly a snatch of song.

"Whoopee ti yi yo, Git along little doggies." Smiling, listening, he lay still—and presently he fell asleep.

The next day went by smoothly, too. It rained, but he was glad enough to stay home that afternoon and work and make more money. By night he had forty-five cents in the bank. And the evening was quiet; and there were more dreams. The day after that, the rain turned to snow; and though, when Joe Winston came for him, his grandmother said he couldn't go out, because it was too slushy, she invited Joe to stay, and she made molasses candy.

So, for about a week or more, he did not find it bad at all. As usual, he was living two lives; and the outer life had suddenly become so nice and quiet here, without any queerness or angry talk, that it left him free for the life inside—a life all filled with his grandfather's songs and the most enthralling pictures of the existence just ahead.

. . . . . .

But now a few worries began to creep in. Though that last talk with Grandfather Wade was still vague in his memory, one point at least was very clear. His mother and his grandfather were to stay right here in New York. Then why didn't

they come to see him? Suddenly he remembered that his Grandfather Wade had said they couldn't come, because Grandmother Barnes didn't want them here. So that was it! It made him angry with her at first, and at the same time afraid of her, too. For how did he know but what, after all, she would keep him here for years and years, and *never* let him go with them? But then, as he remembered more of his grandfather's last talk, he grew quite sure of the trip again. And he did not worry very much, because it was still so quiet here, and he had such a chance to dream and plan.

Grandmother Barnes was certainly a pretty nice old woman, he thought. There was no more hating in her eyes; and more than once, in her big, harsh face, he saw another feeling, which he did not clearly understand, but it made him rather sorry for her. Amory and his father both left her pretty much to herself, except when his father wished to talk business, or Amory had torn his pants. For other things she was no good. She was kind enough, she could cook all right, but you couldn't have any fun with her. She did not really care to read, nor did she know any stories or games, nor did she care a bit for songs. She was good for nothing really but work. So you didn't *want* to talk to her. Still,

you were sorry, all the same. For sitting with her big hands folded, when her work for the day was done, she looked so very lonely.

But after another week had gone by, he began to get lonely, too, and to blame this on Grandmother Barnes. She would not let him go out at all, except when she was with him. She took him to school, and at three o'clock she came again to bring him home. And the boys made fun of him, of course, for having a grandmother hanging around. What was she afraid of? She had even put a stop to all his fun at the playground, too. Whenever Joe Winston came to get him to go out for the afternoon, she either said it was too cold, or else it was too slushy. And when he teased her to let him go, she got cross and told him to shut up! He got more and more tired of Grandmother Barnes. She kept him here working, each afternoon, and the work got stupid and dull. He was sick of earning money. If only he could get out to that ranch, he could have fun enough with those two boys, and adventures, too, without a cent. So he shirked the work she gave him, and she began to nag him now. She was forever after him—and one evening she exclaimed, "I declare, I'm sick and tired of this! What's got into you? Why don't you speak?" And when he still just looked at her, she took him and shook him.

He burst into tears. He ran into his room and went to bed; and later his father came and looked in, with an anxious, worried air. But Amory turned his face to the wall.

The next morning Grandmother Barnes said that he was looking pale, and she took him out for a walk that day, but it wasn't any fun at all. And when, as they were nearing home, he spied Joe Winston and some boys pointing at him and snickering, it made him so mad that he stopped right there; and looking up at her, he asked:

"Look here! Can't I ever go and play with the boys?"

"Yes," she answered, "pretty soon."

"How soon, then?" he demanded. At this, she frowned at him and said:

"You'll go out as soon as I think it's safe, and not one minute sooner, my little man!"

Well, what did she mean by that? He racked his brains that night for a reason, but it was not till the next day that the answer came in a flash. It came through a talk with Joe Winston. Joe asked him where his grandfather was; and when Amory explained, Joe chuckled suddenly and said:

"So that's why your granny won't let you out! Afraid they'll steal you, is she?"

"Naw!" said Amory loftily. But the next minute, when alone, he began to burn inside. So that was it! She wouldn't let them come to him, and she wouldn't even let him out, for fear that they would find him! He was very bitter against her, that day. When she came for him, he would barely speak; and when she tried to talk to him, he was so rude that all at once, with a tight grip on his small arm, she began to scold him so that Amory grew frightened. Back came his old fear of her with a rush, and he was very unhappy that night. He hated her and feared her, by turns, as he lay awake in his small dark room. Keeping him in here all the time, at work he hated! Spoiling his fun! Keeping away all the people he wanted! Hot tears rose into his eyes! Again his father came into the room, but again he turned his face away and bit his lips to keep from crying—till he was alone again. Amory wanted his mother now. He had never known before how much her presence here had helped. She had read to him and sung to him; and though she knew nothing of baseball or any other good rough games, she had laughed and joked with him, and they had had long secret talks. But now she was gone—and he wanted her! And oh, how he wanted Grandfather Wade! Amory's cheeks

were very wet, and his breathing came more quickly. You couldn't go on and on and on, making plans and singing songs to yourself, without a single person here to do it with you! Suddenly it seemed to him as though for months he had felt like this—lonely, wretched, so unhappy! How much longer would they take? When would they come for him? When would they come?

. . . . . .

One night, when his father came home, he said:

"Got a letter for you, Amory."

Amory's heart gave a jump at that, but then he heard his grandmother ask:

"What letter? Let me see it! Here!" Coming quickly in from the kitchen, she just grabbed the letter, tore it open and read it through, with an angry look coming into her eyes. As he watched her, Amory's heart beat fast.

"Can I see it now?" he asked.

"No," she replied. "It's nothing you need read at all!"

"Now look here, Mother," her son began, in a stern, low voice, but she cut him off:

"I won't have it, I tell you!"

He frowned at her.

"I think you're making a big mistake!"

"I know what I'm doing!" she replied. "If you'll just not interfere! I've managed this pretty well, so far!"

She took the letter back into the kitchen; and watching her through the open door, Amory saw her crumple it up and throw it into the kitchen stove. He was trembling now from head to foot. All at once he got so dizzy that he had to hold on to his chair. In a minute, the dizziness was gone, but his forehead was queerly cold and wet. He knew that letter was from *him!* What in the world was he going to do? She wouldn't let them come here, and now she wouldn't even let him have a letter from Grandfather Wade! He felt suddenly shut off—as though he were in a regular prison and his grandfather were outside. How could they ever get him away? It was a hard, frightening thing to think out. So he didn't. He just sat there, a little cold and shaky still. Once he saw his father look up from his paper, in a worried, anxious way; but Amory knew he wouldn't help, he wouldn't go against Grandmother Barnes.

At supper, though, and afterwards, his grandmother was so nice and kind that Amory's courage rose again. Very politely he asked her:

"Are you sure the letter wasn't for me?" Her big face clouded.

"Perfectly sure—that it was nothing you need see. You're better without it," she replied. He waited, with his hands nervously moving.

"But wasn't it from Grandfather Wade—to say when he would be ready?" he asked.

"Ready for what?" Her voice was so sharp that Amory jumped. Now he had done it! What should he say?

"Oh, I dunno," he answered. "I guess it isn't very important." But his voice was trembling still. She looked at him, and all at once her face grew nice and kind again.

"Now, sonny, you just tell me what he was getting ready for, and I'll see what I can do," she said. He hesitated. Should he risk it? There was nothing else to do. But he didn't want to—no, he wouldn't! Yes—yes—he guessed he would! While he was still wretchedly balancing, it was as though some outer force came in and took hold of his thoughts and said, "You must tell me—now—at once." This force came from his grandmother's eyes. Looking at them as though under a spell, he said:

"Well, we were thinking of taking a good, big trip out to a ranch—where there are a good many cows—and two boys just about my age."

"You were, eh? Well, he has changed his mind. He has decided not to take you."

Amory's trembling increased. His face went white.

"You mean that he has gone out there without me?" he asked softly.

She hesitated.

"Yes, he has."

As Amory grew cold as ice, he heard his father say to him:

"No, he's still here, Amory! Your Grandfather Wade is still in New York!"

"Will you stop interfering?" cried Grandmother Barnes. Her son looked angrily back at her.

"You're making a mess of this!" he said. "And I don't propose to wait much longer!"

"Don't you? Then I do!" she cried. "I tell you, I know what I'm about!" Before he could speak, she had turned back to Amory; and she asked him, in a much more friendly tone:

"Look here, sonny, haven't you had a pretty good time since your grandfather left?"

"Yes'm." What else *could* he say?

"There. You see?" she said, to his father, and turning back again, she asked, "But in spite of that, you've been thinking still about that trip he put into your head."

"Yes'm."

"Much?"

"Yes'm!"

"When did he say you'd go?" she asked.

"As soon as he could get the things!"

"What things?"

He began to explain. He was in a state where he could hide nothing any more. But before he had gone very far, she cut him off. In a hard and heavy voice that felt like a sledge hammer, she said:

"Well, he has been telling you lies, that's all—and it's high time you knew the truth—and we got it over and done with. You get your grandfather out of your head—and your mother, too—and all their harum-scarum trips! They're never going to take you at all!"

His father crumpled his newspaper, then, and said something sharp and clear—but Amory took no notice of that. He was staring at his Grandmother Barnes, and the look in his big dilated eyes was so scared that, when she saw it, her face worked queerly; she leaned forward and took both his hands in hers.

"Now listen to me, you poor little kid. I know you're blaming me for this—but I don't mind that, I'm used to it—to getting blamed for everything! But when you're a man, and not a bum, you'll look back and thank your lucky stars that I did what I'm doing—to start you right. It ain't your fault, little sonny, it's theirs! They've put these ideas into your

head, and all these songs and stories of trips—filled you so chock full of 'em, it's bad for you—not natural! You wait and see how glad you'll be, when I've helped you get all rid of 'em, and you're a plain, natural little boy—working hard and doing fine—and getting what you really want!"

"I want *them!*" burst out of him. But her grip tightened and she said:

"No—you don't—they're bad for you! That precious grandfather of yours is no better than a tramp—who tries to go by another name! And your mother is bad—she's bad all through! She has never been a good mother to you. Who nursed you every time you were sick, and fed you and washed you and mended your clothes? I did—I did! Understand? She never cared enough for you to do a single thing, my boy! All she ever cared for was to go running out at night—with that fellah of hers—to be hugged and kissed!"

Amory's father broke in then, again in angry protest; but Amory barely heard the words—he was too terribly frightened now. Trembling, he tried to wrench his small hands away from hers, but she held him still. He heard her say:

"You'll never see those two again!"

"I will!" he panted. "I will—I will!"

"No—you won't! And you'll not want to! Understand? You've just *told* me you were happy

here, and you will be again—just as soon as you quiet down!" Her hands closed tighter. "And," she said, "you're going to be quiet now—right this minute!"

"No!" he cried, in a shaking, loud, unnatural voice, with tears gushing from his eyes. "I *will* see them! Oh-h! I must!"

"No!" she replied. But he jerked and pulled, and screamed at her:

"Let go of me! Let go of me!"

"Not till you quiet down!" she cried. Then all of a sudden it seemed to him that he felt exactly as he had that awful night up on the roofs, when the hideous, haunting shriek had come, and after it bellows and yells and roars! He knew nothing now, he was perfectly wild! He had torn himself loose and was running about—sobbing and gasping, almost blind! She was after him—she was after him! He heard her cries, her heavy tread, and felt her big hands reaching out! He screamed:

"Let go of me! Let go!"

Then at last, in a corner, desperate, panting, he saw that it was his father now who had penned him in. His grandmother came, but his father said:

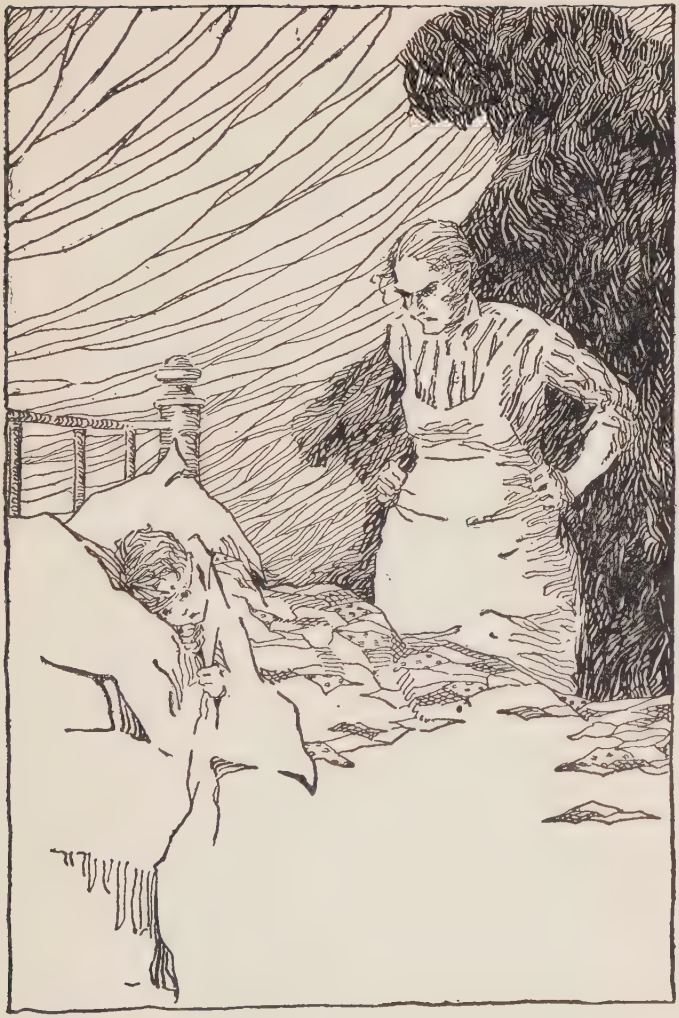
"You keep out of this! You've done harm enough! And I mean to settle it alone!"

Then he turned to Amory, and his voice was suddenly kind.

"Come, son," he said, "you're going to bed." And when they were in the bedroom, he said steadily, "Now stop it—stop!" Amory's eyes were still dilated, wild with fear; he shook and shook with sobbing. "Stop it!" came the voice again. "There's nothing to be scared about. If you want to see them again, you can." And when Amory kept shaking still, holding him close his father said, "And if you want that trip so badly—and all the songs—you'll have them, too. . . . Only be quiet. . . . Listen, can't you? Listen to what I'm telling you."

Little by little his father's words struck into Amory's whirling thoughts: "You can see them. You can have the trip." And though he didn't believe it yet, he did now as he was told. With his father's help, he got off his clothes and jumped into bed, and huddled up and grew very still. He found it no longer hurt him to breathe, so he drew some long, shaking breaths of relief. He didn't want to be like *that* again! The thing that had scared him most was himself—his own queer, loud, shrill, screaming voice and that shaking deep inside. Well, it was over. He noticed now that his feet were cold as ice—so he drew them up to get them warm.

When his grandmother came into the room, he said, in a hard, excited voice:



"Don't you touch me! Leave me alone!"

"All right, sonny." Her voice was sad and kind, but Amory did not notice the change; he was in terror of her still. A vague and dim and haunting fear had come in with her, and it hovered there, until she had tucked in his blankets and gone. Then he kept as quiet as a mouse. All at once he gave a tremendous yawn, which nearly broke his mouth in two—and then another. He tried to stop. He couldn't at first—but then he did—and gave a nice, safe, easy yawn—and in a minute he was asleep.

. . . . . .

When he woke up, it was nearly morning, for he could hear his Grandmother Barnes moving about in her room next his. Slowly he remembered the awful time of the night before, and the look in her eyes, as she had said, "You are never going to see them again!" Then he began to tremble again —but he stopped it and lay thinking. His father had told him, "You can go. You can see them. You can have the trip." And perhaps he could. Maybe Grandfather Wade would go to his father and fix it all up. Amory felt so much better now, that pretty soon he thought he could hear his grandfather's voice, as though it were right here in the room—at first talking and telling a story, with a

twinkle in his small grey eyes; then singing nice, easy, quiet songs. But then suddenly all this stopped; for, in her big blue wrapper, his grandmother came creaking in; and though he pretended to be asleep, when she left he found he was cold again. For all at once he remembered that no matter what his father said, Grandmother Barnes would have her way, as she always did. She would keep him here! He grew colder. Then he thought, "The only thing for me to do is to make my get-away alone!" But where could he get away to? That was the trouble. He didn't know where his grandfather was; he couldn't even remember the name of the hotel he had gone to. . . . No—no—it couldn't be done! Oh, he didn't know what in the *world* to do!

That day his grandmother kept him in bed, with a hot water bag at his feet, and she gave him hot drinks and just *made* him get warm. Once or twice she tried to talk to him, but Amory turned his face to the wall. In the evening, his father came in and asked:

"Feel any better, sonny?"

"Yes," he said, and shut his eyes.

"He won't help me," Amory thought, when he was alone again. "He won't do a thing to make her mad."

Very dismally he fell asleep.

The next day he was better, his grandmother said, and she got him up and had Joe Winston in to play, in the afternoon. And this was such an immense relief that he had a pretty good time with Joe. There was something very comforting in the fat, familiar face of his friend. Joe made you feel that whether or not you had a singing grandfather was mighty unimportant, so long as you had plenty to eat. He stayed to supper, and with his mouth full of corned beef hash, he said:

"Say. She's some cook—ain't she!"

But later, when they were chuckling over a joke that Joe got off, Amory heard his grandmother say:

"What did I tell you? Look at him now."

He glanced around and saw his father looking in from the other room. His fun was all spoiled after this, and he grew so very gloomy that at last Joe declared in disgust:

"You make me sick! I'm going home!"

. . . . . .

The next morning his grandmother took him to school and left him there. It was not so bad at first, but Amory soon discovered that everything was going wrong. He was behind in his lessons, of course, owing to his absence; and there was work to be made up; and he did so badly in every class, that he grew very dismal. Finally his teacher asked:

"What's the matter, Amory? Don't you feel very well?"

"No," he answered gloomily, "I don't feel very well at all!"

So she sent him home. It was the first time in several weeks that he had come home alone. On the way he wondered whether he hadn't better run off and see if he couldn't find Grandfather Wade. And he tried it. He ran block after block, until he was all out of breath. Then he stopped and stood there, panting, scared. He couldn't find Grandfather Wade like this—he couldn't even find his way home! He turned and started back, running blindly, bumping into people, sobbing. Now and then somebody tried to stop him, but he broke loose and ran on and on, with his heart pounding, aching, bursting. Then suddenly he noticed a delicatessen store he knew. He stopped and stared, in deep relief, still breathing hard but growing quiet. In a few moments he went on at a walk, and so came home.

But he was in a cold sweat still, and he had not been in the hot room for a minute before he grew violently sick. Grandmother Barnes put him to bed, and there at last he grew warm again; but he felt sick at his stomach still. He saw how worried his grandmother looked, and he remembered all at once

that his father had said, "If you want them hard enough, you can see them." Well, perhaps now they would understand how very hard he wanted them, and they would send for Grandfather Wade. But when his father came home that night, and Amory sat up in bed and strained his ears to hear their talk, the harsh, heavy voice of Grandmother Barnes came to him saying:

"No—no——"

So *that* was the way she was going to be! Just as he had thought—she would never give in! She would keep him here always, and Grandfather Wade would never come to him again! As he listened, Amory clinched his hands, and his feet grew cold and his head so hot that his thoughts went wild. He hated her! Oh, he hated her! Then all at once he grew terribly frightened—for if he ever told her that, she would grab him again and hold him, hold him! And when at last he got away, she would come after him, breathing hard and creaking on her heavy shoes! Suddenly he felt sick at his stomach—very sick; and he lay quite still. It got a little better soon, but now he grew afraid of the dark. He knew it was only evening still; all night he would have to lie here alone! He began to feel sick at his stomach again—so sick that presently he got up and started for the bathroom. On the way

he changed his mind, for he found he was not sick any more, only just a little. But standing out here in the hall, where a gas jet was burning low, he did not want to go back to his room, where it was so inky dark.

And all of a sudden he knew exactly where it was he wanted to be! He listened, tense and breathless, until he heard his grandmother's snores; then he went to his room, felt around for his clothes, brought them out in the hall and put them on just as quickly as he could. He was breathing fast and smiling now. He went back again for his shoes, and after that went straight to the door which led outside. He was so glad and excited now, he forgot to be very careful; he even made quite a little noise, and he closed the door with a bang. Outside on the landing, he turned and listened. He hoped it had not waked *her* up! Then he ran quickly up the stairs that led to his old secret place. And a few moments later, out he popped on the roof above.

He drew a deep breath of the cool fresh air. Oh, this place was a wonder! He had wanted to come up here before, but his grandmother had forbidden it. Well, he didn't care if she had. He was not so afraid of her now. Proud of himself for having dared to come up, against her wishes, he began walking slowly about. How big and cool

and still it was! But suddenly to his sensitive ears came the sound of a heavy tread on the stairs. He turned with a gasp, and had just time to get behind the big square chimney, when his Grandmother Barnes appeared, and called in a harsh, frightened voice:

"Amory—Amory! Are you up here?"

He kept just as still as he possibly could, but trembled as he heard her again.

"Amory! Amory! . . . Where has he gone to?"

Now she was walking and peering about, in a distracted sort of way; but as she came around the chimney, he moved softly around it, too, keeping it between them, so that she never saw him at all! And after more calls in that frightened tone, she went down again. He waited and waited, to be sure she was really gone. Then he came out from hiding and sat down in his favorite spot. It took some time for his trembling to stop, but it did at last, and he grew very quiet, looking and looking all about.

He began to notice soon that he had never seen it like this. He had been here nearly always at dusk, when the buildings rearing into the sky had been all speckled with points of light that made them warm and bright and friendly. Now they were dark—mere giant shadows, dim and forbid-

ding, towers of gloom. And wherever he looked, it was the same. Gone were the lights that he knew so well. The whole world seemed dark and still and empty. And it was pretty cold up here. He began to feel lonely and scared again and thought he had better go downstairs. But no—he couldn't! With a sharp pang, he remembered that his mother was gone, and that Grandmother Barnes was waiting down there to grab him! No—he must stay here now! The thought made him shiver a little again; but by chance his hand pressed on the chimney behind him, and he felt that the bricks were warm. That was good; it helped a lot! For those bricks were connected in his mind with his little grandfather's stories and songs. He pressed his body against them tight, and pretty soon the rough, warm bricks had so reassured him that he felt a good deal better, and even just a little proud.

"Why, I can stay up here all right," he told himself. He began to think of Grandfather Wade and the many times they had been in this spot. He remembered the time still farther back, when he had been so scared up here, and how Grandfather Wade had found it out, and had brought him up and showed him how nice and safe it really was. And feeling still better, his thoughts ran on to what his grandfather had said, of the people who like

to come up on roofs, or be anywhere else out of doors at night, even in the autumn, when most people stay inside. He thought about the Hunter's Moon.

"And there it is, I tell you!" he suddenly whispered to himself. The sneaky old moon had been hiding behind a tall, dark building over in the western sky, but now its big, round, jolly face looked out to have a peep at him; and then, as though it were a fine joke to have been caught at its sly tricks, in a nice and friendly way it came right out, just beaming; and in a jiffy all the roofs were flooded with a silvery light, so beautiful Amory held his breath.

"Why, it's fine up here! It's fine!" he thought. He felt so nice and quiet now, that before he knew it a song had come—and then other songs, one after the other. Like big white birds they floated down out of the dreamy, silvery night. And every one was from Grandfather Wade, and every single one of them was like a promise that Grandfather Wade would come and get him pretty soon, and take him off to that big ranch—where there were two boys just about his age—and ponies galloping over the plain—and canyons to play games in.

These pictures came between the songs, all disconnected, as in a dream. And he was really dream-

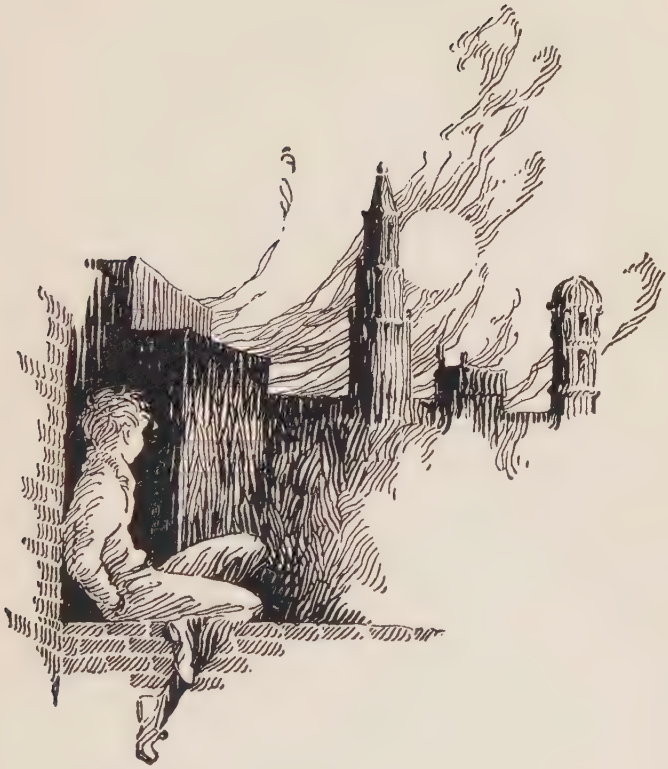
ing now. For an hour or more he was fast asleep. He did not hear the loud, frightened talking far down in the rooms below, nor did he know that his grandfather had been summoned at midnight to help in the search. And so, when he woke up with a start, he could hardly believe his eyes. For there right before him stood Grandfather Wade. In a quiet, smiling voice, he said:

"Well, old scout, it's over now. Your father says you can come with me."

Amory stared, and then got up, to make certain it was real. The next moment, in his grandfather's arms, he said huskily:

"Oh, that's fine—that's fine!"

And the big round moon seemed to think so, too. It smiled and shone in a jolly way, as though it were glad that one more small boy was to get away from the city—and live with about a million cows.



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